

**Minutes of Meeting of Cavan County Council held in the Council Chamber, Courthouse, Cavan on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 2.00p.m.**

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly, Cathaoirleach, presiding

PRESENT: Councillors W. Bennett, D. Brady, N. Brady, P. Brady, S. Conaty, N. Connell, J.P. Feeley, C. Kelly, S.P. O'Reilly, Á. Smith, N. Smith, T. Smith, V. Smith, P. Walsh

IN ATTENDANCE: E. Doyle, Chief Executive  
P. Connaughton, Director of Services  
B. Jennings, Director of Services  
J. Wilson, A/Director of Services  
M. McNally, A/Head of Finance  
E. McGinn, Senior Staff Officer

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Councillor T.P. O'Reilly welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillors C. Brady, S. O'Reilly and B. Fay.

**Confirmation of Minutes**

**1. To confirm Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024. Miontuairiscí cruinnithe 9<sup>th</sup> Mí na Nollaig 2024 a dhearbhu.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor C. Kelly

Seconded by Councillor N. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that minutes of monthly meeting of Cavan County Council held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024 be hereby approved”

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

Noted.

**Note Minutes of Committee Meetings**

**3. To note Minutes of Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024.**

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(a) To note reply from the Minister for Transport regarding the improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads.**

Noted.

**(b) To note reply from Mental Health Service, HSE regarding funding for SOSAD, Cavan.**

Noted.

**(c) To note reply from Office of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in relation to income limits for social housing.**

Noted.

**(d) To note reply from Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications regarding legislation surrounding battery energy storage systems (BESS).**

Noted.

**6. To approve attendance of members at the LAMA Spring Seminar to be held in the Kilford Arms, Hotel, Kilkenny on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor J.P. Feeley

Seconded by Councillor W. Bennett

And

Resolved;

“that the attendance of Councillors N. Brady, W. Bennett, C. Brady, T. Smith, V. Smith S. P. O’Reilly, J.P. Feeley, C. Kelly, P. Walsh, Á. Smith, P. Brady, N. Smith, S. Conaty and N. Connell at the LAMA Spring Seminar to be held in the Kilford Arms, Hotel, Kilkenny on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January be hereby approved”.

## **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. Adoption of the Local Sports Plan.**

It was:

Proposed by Councillor D. Brady,

Seconded by Councillor N. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that the Local Sports Plan be hereby approved”.

**9. Adoption of the North East Region Homelessness Action Plan 2024-2026.**

It was

Proposed by Councillor J.P. Feeley

Seconded by Councillor N. Brady

And

Resolved;

“that the North East Region Homelessness Action Plan 2024-2026 be hereby approved”.

#### **10. To approve Cavan Local Authority Audit Committee Annual Report 2023- (Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations 2014).**

It was

Proposed by Councillor J.P. Feeley

Seconded by Councillor C. Kelly

And

Resolved;

“that the Cavan Local Authority Audit Committee Annual Report 2023 – (Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations 2014) be hereby approved”.

#### **Votes of Sympathy:**

Sympathy was offered to the families of the following:

- Councillor Patricia Walsh on the death of her aunt Ms. Maura Creegan, Dublin.
- Former Councillor Paddy Donald on the death of his sister Mrs. Eileen McDermott, Cootehill.
- The Donohoe Family, Ballyconnell on the death of their brothers Kieran and Padraic within three weeks of each other.
- The Reilly and Stokes Families on the tragic death of Amy Stokes.
- The Heyneman and McLoughlin Families on the tragic death of Mrs. Annie Heyneman, Ballyconnell.
- The Howell Family on the death of former Sinn Féin strategist Mr. Ted Howell.
- Ms. Catherine McGuinness staff member Cavan County Council on the death of her father Mr. William McGuinness.
- The Denning Family on the death of Mrs. Betty Denning, Bailieborough. Mrs. Denning was a popular member of the ICA and a regular fundraiser for good causes.
- Ms. Breda Kelly staff member Cavan County Council on the death of her mother Mrs Phyllis Boylan.

#### **Vote of Congratulations:**

- Mr. Ciarán Cassidy on his production of “Housewife of the Year” screened in the Odeon Cinema Cavan on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January, followed by questions and answers with the director.

### **MEMBERS’ ITEM – DEFERRED FROM DECEMBER MEETING**

#### **11.1 Ag dul I ngleic le céas na dtithe tréighte inár mbailte agus sráidbhailte.**

##### **Tackling the scourge of dereliction in our county’s towns and villages.**

Councillor S. Conaty raised the issue of derelict buildings in our county’s towns and villages stating that it is a shame to see these vacant buildings when the country is in the middle of a housing crisis and hundreds of families with no roof over their heads. He stated that these buildings are eyesores in our towns and have contagious impacts on the commercial and visual health of our towns. Councillor Conaty stated that tackling dereliction is essential to dealing with the homeless crisis as there are 15,000 homeless people in this country and while it is a complex and challenging issue Cavan County Council is moving in the right direction very slowly.

Councillor C. Kelly supported the motion and noted that there are derelict buildings in every town and village.

Councillor W. Bennett supported the motion and stated that the time had come for the owners of vacant and derelict properties to pay tax or hand them over to the Council.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and stated that it is important to acknowledge the ongoing progress throughout the County in relation to the Croí Cónaithe scheme which is a very positive scheme. He stated that Cavan County Council received 394 applications of which 33 are complete and 271 approved in principle.

Councillor Á. Smith supported the motion and noted that a scheme like THE THRIVE scheme should be introduced for smaller towns. She stated that THE THRIVE scheme tackles vacancy and delivers on the Town Centre First policy, but it is based on population which means smaller towns lose out.

Councillor T.P. O’Reilly supported the motion noting that it is important to use every tool available to us to bring these properties back into use.

Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Service stated that the Council have increased their resources to deal with dereliction in our towns and villages. Mr. Jennings stated that the biggest problem is identifying property owners. Mr. Jennings stated that levies on owners of properties on the derelict sites list will be introduced in 2025, and the Council are endeavouring to work on the issue in Cavan town.

#### **11.2 Availability of palliative care.**

Councillor Á. Smith stated that Palliative Care is an approach that improves the quality of life for patients with a life limiting illness and supports their families. Councillor Smith stated that palliative care can be provided at any stage of one's life. Councillor Smith stated that Cavan Monaghan Palliative Care provide excellent support in Cavan and Monaghan. Councillor Smith stated that this incredible team have only six nurses and one consultant to cover both counties with approximately two hundred patients to be seen. Councillor Smith stated that for the population of the area there should be three nurses and two consultants alongside the team according to the 2024 national palliative care plan. She stated that over the last ten years only one extra nurse was recruited and currently there are four positions not filled. Councillor Smith stated that the freeze on recruitment must be addressed. Councillor Smith proposed that Cavan County Council write to the HSE and the Minister for Health asking that they ensure Cavan has a properly resourced palliative care team as soon as possible.

Councillor N. Connell stated that there is no support from the Government and all financial support is done through fund raising.

Councillor P. Walsh seconded Councillor Á. Smith's proposal.

The motion was supported unanimously.

## **MEMBERS' ITEMS – JANUARY**

### **11.3 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 stated that there had been no recent updates on the North South Interconnector since the last Council meeting. He stated that it is hoped a meeting will take place mid-February between the three planning authorities and the ESB.

### **11.4 Flooding and road standards.**

Councillor Á. Smith noted that time and time again West Cavan has seen increased flooding on its roads and that a lack of drainage was a contributing factor to the problem. Councillor Smith stated that water tables were opened in the past and this alleviated flooding and asked if the measure could be introduced into the Roads Programme.

Councillor C. Kelly supported the motion and asked if a new policy could be implemented whereby water tables would be opened every summer so that water could flow away from the roads. Councillor Kelly stated that it is very important extra funding is sought to carry out these works. Councillor Kelly proposed that Cavan County Council write to the incoming Taoiseach and Tánaiste to seek funding to enhance the road structure in rural Ireland.

Councillor D. Brady supported the motion and stated that storm Darragh caused severe flooding in the Cavan Belturbet Municipal District. He stated that small streams in the Swanlinbar and Ballyconnell areas were completely blocked and asked who is responsible for cleaning underneath bridges.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and stated that no matter what drainage takes place it will not address the issue, and we need to involve Transport Infrastructure Ireland to address these drainage issues. Councillor Feeley acknowledged the hedge cutting done by the Council and landowners in recent weeks.

Councillor P. Walsh supported the motion and seconded Councillor C. Kelly's proposal. Councillors W. Bennett and T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service stated that the Local Authority received €300,000 from a climate grant for culverts, while a further €90,000 was allocated from a discretionary grant and €2.3m was furnished for drainage maintenance, potholes and footpaths. Mr. Connaughton stated that currently we are reacting to flooding instead of preventing it. Mr. Connaughton stated that unfortunately at the moment we do not have the resources that are needed.

#### **11.5 Compulsory wearing of hi-vis vests.**

Councillor D. Brady proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Road Safety Authority and the Department of Transport asking that they enforce the compulsory wearing on hi-vis vests. Councillor Brady stated that the amount of people cycling, walking or running without hi-vis vests is frightening. Councillor Brady stated that recently he visited a local school in his capacity as a fireman to speak to the children and asked them how many wore hi-vis vests when walking or cycling to school and no hands went up. He stated that talks need to be given in schools to deliver the road safety programme. He stated that the wearing of a hi-vis could save families from losing a loved one.

Councillor W. Bennett supported the motion and stated that anyone not wearing a hi-vis while out on the roads should be fined. Councillor Bennett seconded Councillor D. Brady's proposal.

Councillor Á. Smith supported the motion and stated that while educating children in schools about the matter is necessary, it is equally important for parents to lead by example and wear hi-vis clothing. Councillor Smith also stated that there is a problem in Cavan with people walking on cycle lanes.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and noted that people should also be encouraged to turn on lights in their cars particularly in foggy weather.

Councillors N. Connell, P. Walsh and T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion.

#### **11.6 Calling on Cavan County Council to source buildings within our county towns and villages for more wheelchair accessible toilets.**

Councillor P. Brady called on Cavan County Council to source buildings within our county towns and villages for more wheelchair accessible toilets. Councillor Brady stated that the county prides itself on being one of the most welcoming counties in Ireland with wonderful facilities but the lack of wheelchair accessible toilets in many places is a cause for concern. Councillor Brady asked that Cavan County Council approach businesses, offer them a grant to install a wheelchair accessible toilet. He stated that a list should be put on the website to inform people of these facilities.

Councillor P. Walsh seconded Councillor P. Brady's proposal and stated that there is a need for toilets in general in our town and villages. Councillor Walsh noted that since covid many businesses closed their public toilets.

Councillor W. Bennett supported the motion and suggested that community centres be used for these facilities as it can be difficult for buses to pull up in towns.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion and stated that grants should be made available to older buildings to have them upgraded as wheelchair accessible buildings.

Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Services stated that there are quite a lot of disabled facilities across the county and new regulations came into force in 2024 that places an onus on all new builds to provide disabled facilities. He stated that there will be significant changes in our county in relation to all of this and it is coming at a time when we are putting huge investment into our public infrastructure. New buildings going forward under legislation must have wheelchair accessible toilets.

#### **11.7 Calling on Cavan County Council to apply to our government departments for more money for our footpaths that are in desperate need of repair.**

Councillor P. Brady proposed that Cavan County Council write to the Department of Transport asking for funding for our footpaths that are currently in desperate need of repair. He stated that people are parking on footpaths making them impassible for wheelchair users or people with buggies. Councillor Brady noted that the footpath on main street from Insomnia to the Farnham Hotel has water frequently lying on it and it is sinking.

Councillors W. Bennett supported the motion and noted that great work was carried out on footpaths by Cavan County Council during the COVID 19 pandemic but more needs to be done and more money is needed to carry out the works.

Councillors T. Smith, S. Conaty, P. Walsh and T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion.

Councillor S.P. O'Reilly asked what figure was paid out in claims in relation to incidents on our footpaths over the last twelve months. He stated that Local Authorities are seen as a soft touch when it comes to putting in a claim and we are allowing people not to be responsible for their own actions.

Ms. Margaret McNally, Head of Finance did not have figures to hand for last five years but informed the members that for Quarter 2, 2024 €14,000 was paid out for three claims.

- 11.8 That Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Transport to increase the allocation for Regional and Local Roads for County Cavan with particular emphasis on Restoration Improvement Grants to enable our Local and Regional Roads Network to be brought up to an acceptable standard to enable local businesses to function properly.**

**Deferred.**

- 11.9 That Cavan County Council write to the Minister for Justice and the Garda Commissioner to enquire about staffing levels and resources including Patrol Cars.**

**Deferred.**

- 11.10 Fadhanna leis an chóras clárúcháin agus díspreagadh líon na vótairí toghcháin. Issues with the voter registration system and suppression of turnout at elections.**

Councillor S. Conaty expressed his disappointment with voter turnout in the elections held during the year. Councillor Conaty stated that voter apathy and disillusionment with the political system is what is wrong with local democracy. Councillor Conaty stated that people are leaving the Country to pursue their professions abroad. Councillor Conaty stated that automatic voter registration should be the way forward and once a person turns eighteen, they should automatically go on the register to vote. Councillor Conaty stated that the number of spoilt votes in the General Election was eye opening and indicates the serious issues that are there which need to be addressed. Councillor Conaty asked that a full investigation be carried out in relation to spoilt ballot papers with no seal.

Councillor C. Kelly stated that it was frightening to see all the people who are on the register but did not go out to vote. He stated that these people are benefitting from what is going on in the country and should be made vote. Councillor Kelly stated that a programme should be introduced in schools that requires young people to be shown how to vote.



Councillor T. Smith noted that it was not just young people that did not vote and noted that there were a lot of older people who did not cast their vote either. He stated that with [checktheregister.ie](http://checktheregister.ie) it only takes seconds for people to apply to go onto the register. Councillor D. Brady supported the motion and noted that the people who do not vote are the people that speak the loudest.

Councillor P. Walsh supported the motion and noted that the staff of Cavan County Council did tremendous work on the register leading up to the elections. Councillor Walsh stated that it is the responsibility of each individual to make sure they are registered.

Councillor Á. Smith proposed that the Council write to the Department of Education asking that Local Government and the Dáil be included in the CSPE programme.

Councillors J.P. Feeley supported the motion and stated that it is unacceptable when people make the effort to come out to vote and it is not counted for want of a stamp. He stated that people are paid to make sure the ballot paper is stamped.

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

#### **11.11 Call on the HSE to come up with a plan to alleviate the trolley crisis in Cavan General Hospital.**

Councillor N. Connell proposed that Cavan County Council write to the HSE asking them to put a plan in place to alleviate the trolley crisis in Cavan General Hospital. Councillor Connell stated that currently there are sixteen people on trolleys in Cavan General Hospital which is inappropriate, and the health care workers are overworked.

Councillor S.P. O'Reilly seconded Councillor Connell's proposal. He stated that the winter flu is causing major problems as patients cannot get to see their doctors and therefore going to A & E when there is no need for it. He stated that the lack of GPs in rural Ireland is attributing to overcrowding in hospitals.

Councillor T. Smith supported the motion and noted that the staff are doing their best in our hospitals.

Councillor D. Brady supported the motion.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and commended the staff in Cavan General Hospital. Councillor Feeley acknowledged the fact that plans have been granted for the new emergency unit in the hospital. Councillor Feeley acknowledged that there is currently a flu crisis and stated that it is still not too late to get the flu vaccine.

#### **11.12 To discuss the problem of dog litter on footpaths in our towns.**

Councillor C. Kelly stated that dog litter is becoming a major issue on footpaths in our towns and villages and people do not realise how dangerous it is for children who encounter it. Councillor C. Kelly noted that recently fourteen pieces of dog litter were

found along the footpath leading to the school. He stated that dog wardens should be allowed to stop people who are out walking their dog and check that they have poop bags with them and if they do not then they should be fined.

Councillor S. Conaty seconded Councillor Kelly's proposal and stated that dog litter bins should be installed in our towns and villages. Councillor Conaty noted that compost bins were situated in Cavan Town and asked if volunteers were looking after these bins.

Councillors P. Walsh and W. Bennett supported the motion.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton, Director of Service acknowledged the context of the problem and stated that Cavan County Council are currently recruiting extra wardens. Mr. Connaughton stated that the difficulty is catching the dog in the act. Mr. Connaughton stated that people make complaints but are not willing to make a statement or attend court. He stated that staff are endeavouring to carry out high-profile dog controls but responsible dog owners know very well that they must pick up after their dog. Mr. Connaughton stated that the Council will assist community groups with the compost bins.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly stated that there should be dog stations provided with bags but not bins for it to be thrown into. He stated that dog owners should bring their dog litter home to their own bins.

#### **11.13 To discuss the situation regarding CCTV availability for towns and villages.**

Councillor C. Kelly asked what the up-to-date situation was with regards to installing CCTV in our towns and villages. Councillor C. Kelly asked who is responsible for controlling the CCTV cameras.

Councillor D. Brady supported the motion and noted that with garda stations in Bawnboy and Swanlinbar closed CCTV is needed. He stated that Ballyconnell Town Development bought CCTV cameras years ago and they are still lying in storage as no one knows where the receiver is going to be placed.

Councillor T. Smith supported the motion and stated that CCTV cameras are needed now more than ever because of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.

Councillor W. Bennett supported the motion and stated that the CCTV cameras in Ballinagh are of huge benefit to the Gardaí and community. He stated that the cameras are as good as having a few Gardaí in the area.

Councillor J.P. Feeley supported the motion and noted that it is the responsibility of An Garda Síochána to police the State and they should be in charge of the CCTV.

Councillor Feeley stated that we are supposed to be focused on protecting our citizens and our property and that is for the State and Gardaí to do.

Councillors P. Walsh supported the motion and asked if the CCTV previously installed in Cavan town is still operational.

S. Conaty and T.P. O'Reilly supported the motion.

Mr. Brendan Jennings, Director of Service stated that the cameras installed in Cavan town are still operating but because of new legislation, they will require substantial upgrading which will be costly. Mr. Jennings stated that by first quarter 2025 a decision is to be made on who the controller will be.

**11.14 To discuss the number of wastewater treatment plants in the county that have to be upgraded.**

Councillor W. Bennett asked the executive how many wastewater treatment plants in the County have to be upgraded and if major work has to be carried out on any of them.

Councillor C. Kelly stated that the Council work with Uisce Eireann and apply early for planning permission if needed rather than waiting until the last minute.

Mr. Paddy Connaughton Director of Service stated that Cavan site included in the Irish Water Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024 include Bailieborough, Ballyjamesduff, Kingscourt, Cootehill and Virginia wastewater treatment plants. He stated that the estimated completion date for Ballyjamesduff WWTP as provided by Uisce Eireann is quarter 3 2026. Mr. Connaughton stated that the estimated completion date for Virginia WWTP is quarter 2, 2026. Mr. Connaughton stated that Project Breifni which includes Cootehill, Bailieborough and Kingscourt WWTP's are currently holding technical review meetings as required to assist the Contractor and their appointed consultants in formulating proposed treatment process design options for further consideration and formal approval purposes. He stated that this exercise will enable VWI to further develop the preferred option design which will be assessed jointly by the Local Authority and Uisce Eireann's ECI team from a technical assurance standpoint. He stated that presently the guideline/estimated completion date for Cootehill, Bailieborough and Kingscourt Projects is quarter 4, 2026 as advised by Uisce Eireann. Mr. Connaughton stated that as Bailieborough WWTP has been progressed further than the other two projects at this stage – a planning application is now expected to be submitted to Cavan County Council's Planning Department by quarter 1, 2025.

Councillor D. Brady wished his colleagues from water services the best of luck as they take up new positions with the Housing Section, Cavan County Council.

Councillor T.P. O'Reilly informed the members that the February meeting will take place in the Lavey Inn on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February.

The meeting concluded at 4.15pm

