

**LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL**

***CORPORATE POLICY GROUP***

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Dundalk.

**In attendance:**

**Members:** Cllr. D. Minogue  
Cllr. M. Doyle  
Cllr. L. Reilly

**Officials:** Joan Martin, Chief Executive  
Joe McGuinness, Director of Services  
Frank Pentony, Director of Services  
Catherine Duff, Director of Services  
Paddy Donnelly, Director of Services  
Bernie Woods, Head of Finance  
Gráinne Tuomey, Administrative Officer

**1. Minutes of 9<sup>th</sup> Sept**

Proposed by Cllr Maria Doyle however as nobody present were at the last meeting it was agreed to treat the minutes as, noted only.

**2. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**3. Budget 2021**

The Chief Executive briefed the members in relation to 2021 Budget proposal and in particular highlighted the following points:

- Covid Costs –
  - Loss of Rates Income and Possible underfunding by Department
  - Covid-19 expenditure costs of circa €1.5m to date
- No increase to LPT to buffer lost income
- October 2% staff pay restoration

In conclusion the CE felt there would be no dramatic difference to the 2021 budget with the exception to €200k set aside for Climate Action which is fundamental to all services.

**4. National Guidance on Council Meetings**

The Chief Executive outlined details of advice received, and clarified that HSE advice had previously been sought and followed, however the following differing HSE advice is now forthcoming:

- Meeting should last no longer than 1hr 55mins
- No two meetings in same day with same group of people
- Have to look at alternative dates for Budget meeting and also have to consider implications of Level 3
- Face to face meeting is still required for statutory business

- Some councils are using Quorum Arrangements (9 members for Louth) – Quorum unlikely to work in councils with a lot of independent members such as Louth as it would be a pro-rata distribution.
- Discussion was held around holding CPGs, SPCs and JPCs online.
- It was confirmed that District Budget meetings must be held.

Cllr. Reilly proposed that Emergency Statutory Business only be heard between 10.00 a.m. and 10.20 a.m. then move to Budget, Cllr Doyle seconded but various other proposals were discussed, such as to allow Cathaoirleach and Meetings Administrator to assess Statutory Business to see if it could be put to future meeting. It was agreed that the issue should be decided by the whips.

## 5. **Other Covid Implications**

Members were advised of other corporate changes due to move to level 3 Covid-19:

- Staff previously required to commit to a minimum two days office attendance are no longer required to.
- Libraries, museums, sports facilities now again closed to public
- Circa 160 staff have been provided with laptops, and another 100 with links to remotely access pc.
- Public footfall into buildings is low, increase in public using phones and email communication rather than presenting even though these methods were always there.
- Louth County Council has been requested to assist in promoting the Covid-19 safety message and is examining methods in getting message across. It was suggested that we look at cross border initiatives for coordinated message with Newry Mourne & Down.

## 6. **Development Plan**

Frank Pentony provided update on public consultation period. Members were advised that they can also make further submission at this stage. Submissions will only be accepted in writing or by email. There is an 8 week period to consider submissions after closing date. Council will get report back in March/April. If there are material changes it will have to go for further public consultation.

Cllr Doyle raised a query around further Member amendments being proposed at last council meeting, it was clarified that this could be done up to the point of the draft plan being adopted.

Members advised Development plan online – open to public next week

## 7. **Draft October Agenda**

Agreed:-

- 1.1 Distribution of Members Allocations – Proposed by Cllr Liam Reilly, Seconded by Cllr Maria Doyle
- 1.2 To consider Conferences – two conference items referred to but due to current restrictions will likely not be going ahead

## 8. **Members Communication Plan**

Significant improvement in response to members queries on sugar noted.

- Joe McGuinness advised a mechanism had been put in place to review items raised at Municipal District Meetings.

- CE Report has been updated and reformatted.
- Noted that an issue arose where an unauthorised video recording was made of the Dundalk MD meeting and posted online. Legal advice re cease and desist letter to be sought.

9. **SPC Work Programmes**

Members discussed level of local issues being discussed at Council Meeting and Chair agreed to remind Members of this during meeting.

SPC to discuss Development Plan and SOGs. It was agreed that the Chair would make the submission on Draft Development plan on behalf of SPC

10. **Condolences**

The volume and nature of condolences raised at meetings was discussed. In general it was agreed that the condolence list was traditionally reserved for persons who had links to Local Authority, or had made significant community improvement, or brought recognition to county. It was agreed to refer this to whips meeting for discussion.

11. **Civic Awards**

Discussed that the spirit of such awards was a community gathering of family and friends to recognise achievements, this goes against current Covid-19 guidelines and is not foreseen that this will lift any time soon. Refer to whips to discuss and agree suspension, online, or other methods of recognition during Covid-19.

12. **Proposal to support Women & Diversity in Local Government**

CE noted that while women are well represented in Louth Co Council there is a wider diversity gap for other groups and welcomed any ideas on how to encourage more women and other diversities into local politics so all residents are represented.

13. **Proposed Presentation from Development Perspectives Group**

Cannot progress meeting with Development Perspective group due to Covid-19 restrictions.

14. **AOB**

Issue raised by Members who advised that they have been invited to a Zoom meeting to discuss matters in relation to Stephentown Pond management. Members were advised it was up to them whether they attended the meeting or not as Stephentown Pond management was a private limited company.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded.

The Minutes were confirmed at a meeting of the Corporate Policy Group held on:

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

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

Meetings Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_