

30<sup>th</sup> September, 2015

TO ALL MEMBERS OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL
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The Adjourned September Meeting of Donegal County Council, will be held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 at 11.00am, in the County House, Lifford to consider the unfinished business listed at Items below:-

Items 10, 15 - 21, 23 - 52.

Please ensure that you bring the agenda previously distributed to the meeting.

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Meetings Administrator

MINUTES OF ADJOURNED SEPTEMBER MEETING OF DONEGAL  
COUNTY COUNCIL, HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON 6<sup>TH</sup>  
OCTOBER 2015

C/421/15     MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs C Brogan, Cathaoirleach, L Blaney, E Bonner, J Campbell, P Canning, T Conaghan, G Crawford, N. Crossan, , G Doherty, L Doherty, M T Gallagher, M Harley, N Jordan, J Kavanagh, N Kennedy, M MacGiolla Easbuig, F Mc Brearty, M McBride, J P Mc Daid, M McDermott, S McEniff, I Mc Garvey, P McGowan, McGuinness, G Mc Monagle, J Murray, S O'Domhnaill, J O'Donnell & J Ryan.

C/422/15     OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Mr Liam Ward, Director of Housing, Corporate & Planning Control/ Meetings Administrator, Mr Garry Martin, Head of Finance & Director of Information Systems & Emergency Services, Mr Joe Peoples, A/Director of Water and Environment , Mr Sean O'Daimhin, Oifigeach Na Gaeilge, Ms Anne Marie Conlon, Communications Officer, Ms Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

C/423/15     APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs A Doherty and John S O'Fearraigh who were unable to attend the meeting.

C/424/15     ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING

The Cathaoirleach paid tribute to Mr John Doherty, Nottingham whose Tour Company, Silverdale Coaches had been involved in bringing tour groups to Donegal and Inishowen in particular. On the proposal of Cllr Mc Brearty, seconded by Cllr O' Donnell it was resolved to adjourn the meeting for a ten minute recess to allow Members participate in a photographic shoot with the Nottingham Tour Group.

C/425/15     CLARIFICATION IN RESPECT OF ITEM 4A - VOTE ON THE LOCAL PROPERTY TAX 2016

The Meetings Administrator responding to a query from Cllr Mc Brearty confirmed that the following was the result of the recorded vote taken on the 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2015:-

- 20 votes for.
- 9 against
- 4 abstentions.

C/426/15 FUNDING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WALKWAYS AND CYCLEWAYS ON OLD RAILWAY TRACKS

It was agreed to defer this motion to later in the meeting.

C/427/15 SEEKING OF A MEETING BETWEEN DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL AND MID EAST ANTRIM COUNCIL TO INVESTIGATE OPTIONS FOR SECURING FUNDING FOR STRATEGIC BRIDGES IN BOTH JURISDICTIONS

On the proposal of Cllr Jordan, seconded by, Cllr Kennedy, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this Council seek to secure a meeting with the Mid East Antrim Council to investigate options for securing funding for the development of strategic bridges in both jurisdictions".

Members were informed:-

“The Council have an ongoing working relationship with Mid Antrim to discuss how both Councils can maximise the current investment in Sliabh Liag and the Gobbins Tourist attractions.

This mainly revolves around marketing and strengthening the existing links between both projects. We are not aware of any specific EU funding sources relevant to the strategic bridges mentioned in the motion.

However, the Council will write to Mid East Antrim Council requesting such a meeting after the Motion is adopted. If successful, the Council will need to prioritise the strategic bridges in Donegal where an application will be submitted”

Cllr Jordan said that there was a good working relationship with Mid Antrim Council given the recent collaboration on the Gobbins/ Sliabh Liag Projects. This, he said, could be extended to include the bridge projects.

It was essential he said that funding was sought for a new bridge at Fintra in light of increased tourism activity in the area and the success of the Sliabh Liag Project.

Cllr Kennedy noted that there had been a number of accidents at this location and was supportive so of a wholistic approach being

taken in order to source funding for Fintra and Ballycarry Bridge in Antrim also.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Cllr Mc Brearty stated that funding was required to deal with to with all of the bridges in the County.

Mr John Mc Laughlin, Director of Roads & Transportation agreed to write to Mid East Antrim Council and confirmed that if funding was forthcoming then it would be necessary to devise a mechanism for dealing with bridge remedial works county-wide.

Cllr Jordan said that it was imperative that both Cllr Kennedy and himself would be allowed to participate in any such meeting.

C/428/15 FREE BUS PASS CALL FOR ALL PATIENTS WHO TRAVEL FOR TREATMENT TO DUBLIN AND GALWAY

It was agreed to defer this motion to later in the meeting.

C/429/15 DISCUSSION BY DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL ON ISSUES RELATING TO CITIZEN INFORMATION AND MABS SERVICES IN THE COUNTY

On the proposal of Cllr McGowan, seconded by, Cllr Canning, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this Council being a consultee and Member of Citizens Information Services in Donegal discuss and agree on issues relating to the Citizen Info and MABS services in the County as previously discussed by this Council."

Members were informed that:-

“Citizens Information Services are managed and operated in Donegal through a company established for this purpose - Donegal Citizens Information Services Ltd (DCIS). The offices of DCIS are located in Letterkenny. Donegal County Council is represented on the Board of DCIS by a nominee of the Chief Executive – currently Liam Ward, Director of Services.

The Board of DCIS currently does not have any role or responsibility for the organisation of MABS services in the

County. These services are the responsibility of three separate MABS companies.

In previous years, the Council was represented on one of the MABS Boards in the County through a staff nominee from the Finance department but at present, the Council is not represented on any of the Boards.

DCIS currently operates seven full-time / half-time outlets around the County, with a number of additional locations served through outreach services as follows:

Full / Half Time	Outreach Service
Letterkenny (F)	Ballybofey
Dungloe (F)	Killybegs
Milford (F)	
Carndonagh (F)	
Donegal Town (F)	
Ballyshannon (H)	
Buncrana (H)	

The growth in the number and distribution of centres in County Donegal was greatly facilitated and influenced by the availability of accommodation and proximity to other service providers in the Public Service Centres developed by Donegal County Council.

The level of service availability in Donegal compares very favourably with the level of service available in comparable Counties. For example, County Galway has one full-time outlet with a number of outreach services. A town like Ballinasloe (population 7,600) for example, does not have any service.

DCIS publish an annual report giving a very comprehensive account of its activities on a yearly basis. The Annual Report for 2014 has been published and a copy has been made available to the Member who tabled the motion.

In terms of the provision of Citizens Information Services in the Finn Valley area, it is noted that full-time centres are operating in close proximity to the Finn Valley, in Letterkenny and Donegal Town, in addition to the outreach service provided in Ballybofey.

DCIS staff are available to handle telephone queries from any part of the County. It is the case that the outreach service in Ballybofey

is being temporarily suspended as alternative accommodation has to be found. Donegal County Council is actively working with DCIS to achieve an early resolution to this issue.

It is the Board's view that this represents a very good level of service (and available evidence from customers supports this), DCIS are nevertheless continually evaluating opportunities to enhance the quality and availability of services, depending on the patterns of demand and availability of resources, and will continue to do this, through the Services Delivery Sub-Committee of the Board.

DCIS has acknowledged and is extremely grateful for the support received from Donegal County Council as without it, DCIS would not have the resources to deliver the range and quality of services that it provides and evidenced in the Annual Report.

It is understood that options for a major re-organisation of both Citizens Information and MABS services are under consideration by the National Citizens Information Board at present. In that context, the primary objective of DCIS is to protect and enhance services in County Donegal.”

Cllr Mc Gowan acknowledged the excellent service provided by both the Citizens Advice and the MABS Agencies. He asked that every effort be made to encourage and persuade both organisations to bring their services to the people of east Donegal. Members acknowledged the lack of service provision in the Buncrana to Donegal Town region.

East Donegal, he said, had similar problems to the rest of the County but had unique issues arising from its cross-border location.

He reiterated his call for a number of legacy issues to be dealt with as soon as possible

Cllr Canning outlining his support for the motion called for adequate funding measures to be put in place

Mr Liam Ward, Director of Service said that as the Chief Executive's nominee on the Board of CIS Ltd, he had, raised the issue on a number of occasions. Mr Ward acknowledged that this

matter had been raised on a number of occasions and alluded to the fact that a review was ongoing at national level.

He agreed to raise the issues highlighted at board level and to enquire as to the options for an increased provision of a part-time service at least in the Finn Valley area.

There was no opposition to the Motion.

Cllr Mc Gowan acknowledged the efforts of the Director to progress the matter and outlined the necessity of dealing with the matter at County level where there was a greater appreciation of the problems that needed to be addressed.

C/430/15 CALL FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE PROVISIONS IN THE UPCOMING BUDGET FOR THE IMMEDIATE INSULATION OF ALL LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING STOCK

On the proposal of Cllr Gary Doherty, seconded by, Cllr M. T. Gallagher, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this Council calls on the Government to make provisions in the upcoming budget for the immediate insulation of all local authority housing stock."

Members were informed that:-

“The Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government has introduced a Fabric Upgrade – Energy Efficiency Programme over the past few years.

In line with funding available the existing Energy Retrofit Programme is concentrated on a Fabric Improvement Policy directed towards a “comfortable living” baseline of 300mm roof insulation, wall insulation, and draught proofing, as Phase I of the programme. It is understood that Phase II of the programme will involve the replacement of Windows and Doors where necessary.

Donegal County Council has been very proactive in terms of drawing down funding from the DECLG for these works as the table below reflects:

Year Claimed /	No. of Units	Amount Allocated
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2013	234	€325,561.00
2014	513	€800,503.00
2015 (in progress)	500 (+)	€1,207,231.00

Indicators are that monies will again be made available next year to enable the continuance of this programme.”

Cllr Doherty welcomed works completed to date on DCC Housing stock but said that it was vital that every effort was made to maximise funding opportunities into the future.

Cllr Gallagher cited the need for a retrofit programme and the necessity of having this extended to all housing stock. She outlined specifically a need for a Windows and Door Scheme.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Mr Liam Ward, Director Housing, Corporate & Planning Services alluded to his reply and the programme of funding which was currently available. He acknowledged that there were issues which needed to be followed up particularly in relation to the replacement of windows and doors but was hopeful that these would be dealt with under phase two of the programme.

The Council, he confirmed, would seek to make the full use of the programme and of all available funding opportunities so as to complete the maximum number of units.

C/431/15 FREE BUS PASS CALL FOR ALL PATIENTS WHO TRAVEL FOR TREATMENT TO DUBLIN AND GALWAY

On the proposal of Cllr Harley, seconded by, Cllr Kavanagh, the following motion was adopted:-

"I am calling on this Council to ask the Government to issue a bus pass to all cancer and all other patients travelling to Galway or Dublin during the period of their treatment regardless of their age."

Cllr Harley, said that, the issuing of such passes would go some way in eliminating the hardships faced by many Donegal people, especially those forced to travel long distances for medical and cancer care.

These passes, he said, would not place a massive burden on the state and could be issued for designated periods only.

Cllr Kavanagh supporting the motion said that ideally it would be better to have the relevant services located in the North West. This proposal would at least, he added, provide some level of assistance to those availing of cancer and other vital medical services.

There was no opposition to the motion.

It was agreed that the motion would be forwarded to the relevant government departments.

Cllr Harley asked that a copy be circulated to all other Local Authorities for consideration and to the Irish Cancer Society for their information.

C/432/15 DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR THE FULL RETENTION OF THE NOWDOC/CAREDOC SERVICE ACROSS DONEGAL AND THAT THE AMBULANCE SERVICE IS MADE FIT FOR PURPOSE

On the proposal of Cllr O'Domhnaill, seconded by, Cllr Crawford, the following motion was adopted:-

"That Donegal County Council fully support the full retention of the NowDoc/CareDoc service across Donegal and that the Ambulance service within the County is made fit for purpose to ensure that response times are adequate and minimised in all parts of the County."

Cllr O' Domhnaill welcomed the recent announcement that full NowDoc and CareDoc services would be retained in Carndonagh and Gweedore. It was essential, he said, that such services were fully retained and strengthened.

He alluded also to a number of anomalies which existed in the ambulance service. The HSE, he contended, was not fulfilling its role as a service provider to rural Ireland.

Lives, he contended, were being put in danger as a result of ongoing difficulties in accessing the ambulance service. It was noted that there was only one ambulance assigned to cover Inishowen, an area the size of Co Louth.

Concern was expressed also that NowDoc no longer operated as first responder and that ambulances were being called out even when there was a NowDoc Doctor less than five minute away.

He asked that a cross-party delegation inclusive of DCC representatives on the HSE Forum West meet with the HSE and the Ambulance Service to address inefficiencies in service provision.

Cllr Crawford seconding the motion paid tribute to Ambulance and other Emergency Personnel whom, he acknowledged, worked under considerable constraints. He noted that additional staff had been taken on to operate intermediate care vehicles and provide non emergency care so as to free up emergency personnel yet major gaps in the service still existed.

A number of other queries were raised including,

- The need for an explanation as to why there were gaps in gaps in supervisory management over the 2014 Christmas-New Year period.
- The usage figures and costs associated with the hiring of private ambulances.
- Query as to whether a private ambulance from Castlebar was used to transport a patient within the town area of Letterkenny.
- Deployment issues to be clarified.

The Cathaoirleach said that Senior HSE Management should be invited to meet with the Elected Members to discuss the situation. He said it was imperative that at least one member from each party attended and that the delegation was representative of all Municipal Districts.

C/433/15

FUNDING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WALKWAYS AND CYCLEWAYS ON OLD RAILWAY TRACKS

On the proposal of Cllr McBride, seconded by, Cllr McBrearty, the following motion was adopted:-

"That Donegal County Council put a fixed sum into our next budget of approximately €25000 specifically for the development of our railway tracks as walkways and cycle-ways to enhance our

public amenities and help fast track our opportunities of major European funding so we can finish these tracks to the same standards we find when we visit our European neighbours."

Members were informed that:-

“As requested by Elected Members, Donegal County Council is placing an emphasis on the development of walks Trails and Greenways.

The work to be carried out will focus to a large extent on the routes of the old railway lines in the county. Work will be carried out along these routes in as far as possible working in close collaboration and in partnership with local communities and other relevant stakeholders.

At present, a collaborative model involving close working between the Council and local communities and landowners is seeing good progress on an incremental basis and has seen the development of excellent local routes which are and which will be part of an overall countywide greenway in time.

The preparatory work being undertaken by the Council and its partners at present is opportune in light of the funding cycle now being entered in to. In this context, Donegal County Council will be seeking to access and to utilise funding from sources such as listed below for the best benefit of the county:  
Peace IV, Interreg V, LEADER/RDP , Rural Recreation,  
Department of Environment, Community & Local Govt and  
Donegal County Council own resources.

It is essential to plan for an integrated and co-ordinated approach to accessing and utilising each of these potential areas of funding to ensure a joined up approach, no duplication and maximum value to the county. The work being carried out by Donegal County Council is seeking to ensure this.

It is expected that the LEADER/RDP may be available by the end of this year (subject to the Local Development Strategy being submitted by the LCDC), it is expected that there will be a call for Interreg V proposals over the next number of months (Sustainable transport including Greenways opens on 18th December 2015).

We are awaiting confirmation of dates with regard to the Peace IV Programme.

A number of applications/expressions of interest have already been submitted to the Recreation Funding 2015 scheme for smaller pieces of work on our paths & trails network.

It is proposed to have applications ready for these funds (and any other potential funds that may emerge) at the appropriate times, working in close cooperation with local communities.

Any contribution from own resources would be prioritised in context of the overall budget demands and would help complement and enhance ongoing work being delivered by Donegal County Council through the Donegal Trails Office.”

Cllr Mc Bride called on the Council to be more proactive with regard to the development of walking tracks and cycle-ways and to source all available funding so as to ensure that Donegal did not lag behind in terms of tourism development.

Cllr Mc Brearty supporting the motion advocated the utilisation of old railway track lines and bridges so as to maximise the tourism potential of the County.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Mr Seamus Neely, Chief Executive said the motion was timely and afforded Donegal County Council the opportunity to reconfirm its support for this type of activity and product development in the 2016 budget preparations. There would, he advised, be opportunities for funding under the Interreg Programme. He was, he said, keen to have flexibility in the 2016 Budget so as to provide match funding for the adoption of an integrated approach for this type of activity. It was acknowledged that there were opportunities going forward to improve and link isolated walkways and that there was something that could be examined as part of the 2016 Budget preparations.

He was, he said, hopeful that the next round of funding would make significant impact on these types of activity.

Cllr Gallagher asked that her motion be amended to read as follows:-

"That this Council request the Department to adopt a seasonal rates policy, to ensure that small seasonal businesses are in a position to continue to operate, and encourage opening of closed premises in town centres."

On the proposal of Cllr M.T. Gallagher, seconded by, Cllr McMonagle the motion as amended was adopted:-

Members were informed that:-

“Under the Valuation Act 2001, Local Authorities have to issue rate demands in respect of all properties which have been valued by the Valuation Office.

Consideration is given at the end of each financial year to write off rates which are not due in certain circumstances, such as, if the property has been vacant and was advertised for lease or rent; if the property has been occupied by a community and voluntary body, etc.

At present, there is no provision under current rating law to permit rates to be written off for a business that is seasonal in nature and closes for certain parts of the year.

In relation to the valuation of the property, the Valuation Office advises that there are a number of methods used by the Valuation Office to assess the valuation of a property.

The most common method used is direct comparison with annual rental values of similar properties in the area. If the annual rental values of the property take account of the seasonal nature of the business and the location, this should be reflected in the initial valuation placed on the property.

The Valuation Office are currently carrying out a countrywide revaluation, on a County by County basis, and the Council is working with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Valuation Office to ensure that Donegal will be included at any early date for a global revaluation.

The global valuation will see all properties in the County being valued at the same time and this will ensure fairness and equity in the valuations going forward. However, current individual property valuations may increase or decrease as a result of this.

In 2012 at the request of Elected Members, a measure to apportion rates so that the occupier is only paying rates on the parts that they occupy was introduced.

This Informal Temporary Apportionment measure means that floor space that is not being used can be deducted for rating purposes, subject to payment performance on the account and is a mechanism to try and sustain and maintain businesses by reducing the rates due in so far as was possible.

The uptake on this measure is significant and continues to be an aid to businesses to reduce their rate demands. Over €1m was written off under this measure in the two year period 2013 - 2014.

In 2015 the Council introduced a Small Business Grant Scheme where the rate payer can receive a reduction of 5% (subject to a maximum of €250) on their 2015 rate bill if they have no arrears at the end of 2015. The outcome of the impact of this Scheme will be discussed with the Elected Members as part of our annual budgetary process.”

Cllr Gallagher noted that many businesses operated on a seasonal basis yet had to pay rates for the full year.

A seasonal rate policy, she contended, would encourage town centre development and benefit Donegal County Council in the long run. Many businesses it was acknowledged whilst economically viable were not in a position to afford exorbitant rates.

Cllr Mc Monagle supporting the motion advised that this policy would also be of benefit to students seeking summer employment.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Mr Garry Martin, Head of Finance, Emergency and Information Systems said that the Valuation Office when revaluing properties did genuinely take into account the fact that drivers for a business could include seasonal factors.

The request, he noted, was timely and could be brought to the attention of the Department. He asked Members to be mindful of the fact that there was a full scale countrywide revaluation taking place and that it was hopeful that Donegal would be reviewed in the period 2018-2020.

This revaluation, he said, would see some losers and some winners and take cognisance of the fact that the economic drivers had changed. It was essential also, he added, that Donegal County Council did not lose any income as a result.

Cllr Gallagher welcomed the response and said that efforts to enhance and promote town centre development could be progressed as part of the new Community Plan Initiative.

C/435/15     DISCUSSION ON THE HOUSING SITUATION AND THE NEED FOR THE PURCHASE OF MORE HOUSING STOCK IN THE COUNTY

It was agreed to take item 23 and 25 together as the items covered similar topics.

On the proposal of Cllr Crossan, seconded by, Cllr Kennedy, the following motion was adopted:-

"That Donegal County Council purchase more houses to add to our current rental stock, and deliver a quicker, more cost effective service."

Members were informed that:-

The acquisition of suitable properties to add to the Council's Housing Stock is viewed as an attractive and cost effective way of meeting some of our Housing need. Under the Social Housing Strategy, the Department has identified the acquisition of houses as one of the most realisable means of delivering on housing units in the first years of the Strategy.

In terms of acquiring houses, the Council has taken the opportunity to acquire a number of units to meet the special needs of clients where the traditional form of supports would not meet their needs or where there was a lack of accommodation.

Towards the latter part of 2014, funding was made available by the DECLG to fund the acquisition of 14 such units whereas for 2015, 19 units are targeted and these are advancing. The Council have also just recently completed the acquisition of a further 7 dwellings which formed part of a National portfolio, processed by the Housing Agency on behalf of Local Authorities.

On the proposal of Clr McGuinness, seconded by, Clr Crossan, the following motion was adopted:-

"That the Council discuss the Housing situation in the County."

Members were informed that:-

"The attached report is made available to inform the discussion of this motion." (Vide appendix 1)

Cllr Crossan said that housing purchase was the way forward and would allow the Council to buy the specific type of houses that they needed. There was, he advised an onus on the Council to look for houses in areas of need and that this was something that could be explored through the private sector.

Cllr Kennedy concurred with this assessment.

Cllr Mc Monagle alluding to the serious nature of the discussion said he was of the opinion that all Members needed to contribute to this debate.

Cllr Mc Guinness said, he believed, that Standing Orders needed to be reviewed and that a contribution was needed in this case from all representative groupings on the Council.

He said that he was neither criticising nor supporting the Government, but was firmly of the opinion that the housing crisis needed to be tackled immediately. He asked that further information be provided in relation to the following:-

- Number of families on the housing waiting list.
- Number of families availing of emergency housing.
- Number of houses purchased in Donegal in the last 10 years.
- Number of Houses built by Donegal County Council in the last ten years.

- % of offers of housing refused by applicants and the reasons for refusal.
- Numbers of those taken off the Housing List for refusing Council accommodation.
- Monies paid in respect emergency housing.

He suggested that a list of properties be identified for consideration in the event that additional funding was available.

Cllr Mc Guinness alluded to the fact that private sector housing was available in the Inishowen MD for much less than costs associated with building local authority housing.

The Cathaoirleach stated that he was not opening the motion open to the floor.

Mr Liam Ward, Director Housing, Corporate & Planning said that housing purchase was only one part of the Council's Housing Strategy and that this option had been explored as monies were available. Specific houses, it was acknowledged, had been bought to meet specific needs and in accordance with the funding available.

His reply, he added, reflected the position from both a national and local perspective. Information, he said, could be made available regarding house purchases over the past ten years

It was confirmed that there were 2495 families on the Housing Waiting List and that on occasion support was provided to those in need of emergency housing, namely payments for bed and breakfast accommodation on a short term basis only. This, he confirmed, was something that did not occur on a regular basis.

Funding for the purchase of housing, it was acknowledged, had been significantly reduced over the past number of years. It was noted that up to 40 houses in total had been purchased over the past two years. Members were also reminded that in some instances house purchase was not the most cost effective method of housing provision when all other factors were taken into consideration.

Mr Ward stated that there was a 30% refusal rate associated with housing lets and that this was in part due to the fact that many applicants were living in private rented accommodation and availing of rent supplement. Person refusing for a second time for non valid reasons were, he confirmed, suspended from the waiting list for a one year period, but could reapply if deemed eligible. He said that it would be possible on checking to confirm the exact numbers involved. It would also be possible, he stated, to review the policy in relation to the purchasing of former Council Houses.

The Chief Executive informed Members that meetings had taken place with Minister Kelly and Minister Coffey to discuss the housing programme in general.

The fact that over one third of offers were rejected was, he added, a significant statistic and resulted in properties being vacant for longer than they should, thus creating an opportunity for things to go wrong. It was acknowledged that over the past few years the Council had not been in a position to bring these properties to a satisfactory standard, but that approval had recently been received to carry out works to 111 vacant units in addition to the 43 units previously approved. It was thus anticipated that up to 154 vacant homes would be fit for re-letting at the end of 2015.

With regard to the buying of properties, the Chief Executive confirmed that the value for money aspect had to be considered and that purchases would have to be funded through the Capital Acquisition Programme. The Council, he added, could only buy when it was in a position to recoup capital monies, and that it was presently in a good position to pursue same.

One issue, he said, that warranted consideration was whether it was more economical in the long run to build purpose built accommodation or source accommodation through the open market.

He said that a more robust allocation was needed in respect of the Construction programme allowing houses to be built where people wanted them. He cited the necessity of having a more streamlined approach particularly in relation to the planning element and thus eliminating some of the associated time lags.

He acknowledged the fact that Members were looking for additional capital resources to facilitate the purchase of houses in 2016.

Cllr Crossan suggested that a list of properties for sale be compiled and prioritised in the event that monies were made available.

Cllr Mc Guinness welcomed the proactive approach from the Executive and said he was shocked at the 30% figure for refusals. He alluded to the fact that €8m funding had been approved by the Department for housing construction when in fact Donegal had many vacant houses of good standing and good value.

C/436/15 CALL FOR THE COUNCIL TO REVISIT THE APPROVAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISABLED GRANTS

On the proposal of Cllr Canning, seconded by, Cllr Crawford, the following motion was approved:-

I would ask that this Council revisit the method of approval and recommendations for Disabled Grants insofar as certain houses that meet the Part M disability criteria within the Building Regulations but do not meet the Occupational Therapists recommendations."

Members were informed that:-

“Part M of the Building Regulations specifies standards to be met in relation to dwellings at a general level. These are primarily designed to ensure visit ability by people with disabilities.

The Housing Adaptation Grant for people with a disability is available to assist in the carrying out of works that are reasonably necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with a disability who is a member of the household. As these grants are specific to the individual needs of the members of the household, the requirements in some instances can exceed the general provisions as contained within Part M of the Building Regulations.

In line with existing policy, in considering a grant, the type of work is directed at adaptations more than extensions and the provision of an extension is the last resort. If there is any room available in a dwelling which can meet the needs of the person with a disability, the grant is only made available for adaptations for that room as opposed to the provision of an extra room.

There are however occasions where due to the specific needs of a client, notwithstanding the availability of a separate room in a

dwelling, while it will meet the requirements of the Building Regulations, it will not cater for a client's specific needs in the long term.

While this naturally will attract a higher level of costs, it is believed that it is in the long term best interests of the person with the disability.”

Cllr Canning noted that in many cases there appeared to be different sets of regulations for different bodies and that this was causing confusion for the public in general. He alluded also to a motion which he had submitted earlier in the year in relation to smoking rooms and noted that there had been an issue here also in terms of how the legislation was being read. There were, he said, issues with regard to the interpretation of the legislation. He would, he confirmed, be supportive of an enquiry as to how the HSE spent its money.

It was imperative, he confirmed, that any increase in criteria was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the grant aid.

Cllr Crawford concurred with the above and noted that many applicants were not in position to pay one third of the adaptation costs.

There was no opposition to the motion.

Mr Liam Ward, Director Housing, Corporate & Planning Control stated that whilst the building regulations set out the minimum standards, it was often the case that additional works were needed to meet the applicants need and that these at times were beyond the general provisions of the building regulations.

He was, he confirmed, happy to review the criteria used and that the matter was scheduled to be discussed by the Housing & Corporate SPC.

Cllr Canning concluding cited the necessity of reviewing the legislation in general .

C/437/15

CALL FOR EXTRA NATIONAL DRIVERS LICENCE  
SERVICE CENTRES IN DONEGAL

On the proposal of Cllr Murray, seconded by, Cllr McMonagle, the following motion as submitted by Cllr A Doherty was adopted:-

"Given that in Donegal the NDLS (National Driver Licence Service) is not delivering from Letterkenny an adequate and acceptable service to 95% of the people within 50km of the centre, that this Council tender to deliver the NDLS SERVICE from its Electoral Areas at the first and earliest opportunity and in the interim direct the appropriate Minister to at least ensure NDLS establish and deliver a part time centre to venues outside the 50km recommended distance deadline. (Similar to Galway and Mayo)."

Members were informed that:-

"As Elected Members are aware, the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS) falls under the responsibility of the Road Safety Authority and is no longer the function of the Local Authorities.

Donegal County Council is supportive of the proposal of making its network of Public Service Centres available for the delivery of the NDLS throughout County Donegal.

Should the motion as tabled be adopted by Donegal County Council, the Council will write to the relevant Minister bringing the concerns of the Council in relation to the current availability of the NDLS in the County and also outlining the support of the Council in making its network of PSC's available for the delivery of same."

C/438/15 CO-OPERATION BETWEEN AGENCIES TO DEVELOP ALL NECESSARY TOURIST AMENITIES IN DONEGAL

On the proposal of Cllr Murray, seconded by, Cllr McMonagle, the following motion was adopted:-

"That Donegal County Council in conjunction with the OPW, Failte Ireland and all other relevant agencies commits to flagship tourist projects in Co Donegal by working to develop all necessary tourist amenities"

Members were informed that:-

"Donegal County Council continually works with all the agency partners in County to advance Tourism Flagship projects through both formal consultations and through community representations. The Council then through their EU unit seek constantly to identify

potential funding sources both through National Development Funds and potential EU Funding programmes and then what potential EU partners we may seek to link with who maybe looking at similar themed areas. It is through these routes we have found to be most effective in seeking the level of funding to develop Flagship Tourism Projects.”

Cllr Murray noted that his motion had been amended by the CPG as it had originally been localised in nature.

It was essential, he said, that the Grianan of Aileach was actively promoted as a major tourism project so as to build on the promotional efforts of the local community and business organisations. Much work, he confirmed, needed to be done to develop amenities at the site. The following, he said, needed to be progressed immediately:-

- Disabled access facilities.
- Provision of tea and coffee facilities.
- Dedicated advertising campaign.
- Promotion of the site as the first stop on the tourism route for Donegal.

He called for the formation of a working group comprising Donegal County Council, the Office of Public Works, Inishowen Development Partnership and Local Community Organisations and suggested that they initiate a campaign focusing on the development of the Grianan.

Cllr Mc Monagle noted that there were up to 150 geographical heritage sites in Donegal and said that should be mapped out for promotion on the world wide web. The Grianan’s connections to other local battle sites, he said, could be explored and there was also the possibility of using the site as a “Shared Space”.

There was no opposition to the motion.

The Cathaoirleach said that the OPW should be invited to meet with Donegal County Council regarding a number of different projects in the County.

Cllr Murray concluding said it was imperative that contact was made with the OPW in order to develop the full tourism potential of the County.

C/439/15 CATHAORLEACH'S BUSINESS

*Votes of Sympathy*

Votes of sympathy were extended to the following:-

- Sinead Harkin, Central Planning Unit on the death of her sister, Pam Ramsey.
- Maire Ni Fhearraigh, Community & Enterprise, Letterkenny on the death of her father, Tom Ferrie.
- Cllr Ian Mc Garvey on the death of his daughter, Norma Mc Garvey.
- Fiona Doherty, Inishowen Municipal District on the death of her brother, Ciaran Doherty.
- Paul Mc Gill, Housing & Corporate, Glenties MD on the death of his father, Vincent Mc Gill.
- Caroline Britton, Community & Enterprise, Donegal on the death of her father, Michael Mc Grath.
- David Friel, Water & Environment (Co Laboratory) on the death of his father Brian Friel.
- The family of the late Mary Doherty, Ladden, Fanad who worked in the Map Shop – Letterkenny PSC.
- Paul Mc Gill, Housing & Corporate, Glenties MD on the death of his uncle Donal Mc Auley and his cousin Fergus Mc Gee

*Special Meeting of Council*

On the proposal of Cllr Mc Monagle, seconded by Cllr Mc Garvey it was resolved to hold a Special Meeting of Council on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 at 11 am in the County House, Lifford to approve Pilot Speed Limits in selected Housing Estates.

*Meetings to discuss Draft MD Budgetary Plans for 2016*

On the proposal of Cllr Mc Monagle, seconded by Cllr Mc Garvey it was resolved that Special Meetings to discuss the Draft Budgetary Plans for each of the Municipal Districts would be held on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 at 10.30am in the County House, Lifford.

*Civic Receptions*

On the proposal of Cllr Brogan , seconded by Cllr Mc Daid, it was resolved that a Civic Reception be afforded to the Letterkenny Tidy Towns Committee in recognition of the towns outstanding achievement in winning the Supervalu Tidy Towns Competition 2015. It was agreed that this would be hosted jointly by the Cathaoirleach and the Mayor of Letterkenny Municipal District.

It was further agreed on the proposal of Cllr Brogan, seconded by Cllr Mc Garvey that a reception when possible be afforded to Mr William C Campbell formerly of Ramelton to honour his outstanding achievement in jointly winning the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

C/440/15 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Members noted the report circulated with the agenda and addendum circulated during the meeting.

The following items were noted:-

- Proposed Roundabout on N56 at Kilty, Letterkenny.
- Donegal Diaspora's Global Skills Locator.
- Donegal Bay and Blue S Stacks Festival 25<sup>th</sup> September-4<sup>th</sup> October, 2015.
- Wainfest Arts and Books Festival 10-17<sup>th</sup> October, 2015-10-23.
- Donegal-Ireland 2016 Steering Committee update.
- Update from E U Unit.
- Sport4Life.
- Donegal Wild Atlantic Way Video.
- "Connecting the Wild Atlaantic Way' Tourism Conference."
- Donegal Diaspora Project-Tip O'Neill Weekend 25<sup>th</sup> September,2015.
- To note recent legislation/regulations:
- Urban Regeneration & Housing Act 2015-10-23
- Building Control (Amendment) Regulstions 2015
- National Littering Pollution Monitoring System Report, 2014.
- Introduction of new Primary Waste Management Legislation.
- Summer Bathing Season/Water Safety.
- Beach Access.
- Implementation of Workforce Planning and arrangements for the filling of vacancies within the Management and Staffing Structures in Donegal County Council

- Planning Review
- Returning Vacant Stock to Productive Use

**The following questions were noted by the members:-**

C/441/15 REVIEW OF THE POLICIES FOR ALLOCATION OF THE DISABLED PERSONS GRANT

The following question was submitted by Cllr Kavanagh:-

"Can the council review its policies with regard to the allocation of housing adaption grants for people with a disability and for elderly people, as currently too many successful applicants are not in a position to take up the offered grant as they cannot afford the balance to meet the quotation for the work, and the grant therefore does not get drawn down, this has implications for the ability of elderly and disabled people to remain in their own home?"

Cllr Kavanagh was informed that:-

To date this year, over €200,000 has been paid out in respect of 70 grants.

The Housing & Corporate Strategic Policy Committee agreed and prioritised its Work Programme at the first meeting of the SPC held in early 2015. As part of its Work Programme, the SPC members identified the need to review the grant levels under the various Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes. This review is targeted for completion in Q4. 2015 and will be presented to the Corporate Policy Group and full Council for consideration in due course.

C/442/15 PROTECTION OF COUNTY'S BEACHES FROM ILLEGAL SAND REMOVAL

The following question was submitted by Cllr Kavanagh:-

"I was recently given photographic evidence of an industrial level of illegal sand removal from on the of the county's most scenic beaches, are the Council happy that enough is being done in terms of monitoring and in terms of enforcement in order to protect our beaches from this activity, given the huge importance and central part that our beaches play in attracting tourists to the county?"

Cllr Kavanagh was informed that:-

“The unauthorised removal of sand at the scale indicated is viewed as a serious infringement of the Planning and Development Act. When such cases are reported the matter is treated as a priority and is investigated accordingly. In many instances such cases involves direct consultation and cooperation with other agencies to bring about an effective prosecution of the matter.”

C/443/15 QUERY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUDITORS RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING TENDER PROCEDURES

The following question was submitted by Cllr Shiels:-

"Can the Council confirm why for a number of years now the Local Government Auditors annual repetitive recommendations as to regularising tender irregularities have been ignored and nothing substantive has ever been done to remedy those issues?"

Cllr Shiels was informed that:-

The Local Government Auditor has, as part of successive audits addressed matters relating to tendering and purchasing (i.e. the process of paying for goods received). These matters have been variously referenced in the audit reports for period 2010 – 2014. The matters raised in the audit reports have been responded to by the management of the Council within the individual reports directly and addressed as part of ongoing work programmes.

The said references in the Audit reports in this connection fall broadly into two main categories, namely:

- (1) The tendering of particular pieces of work
- (2) Purchasing process (i.e. the process for paying for goods received)

In relation to the first this relates to work such as legal services, a subject that has been addressed on a number of occasions by the Elected Council by way of motion/question. As has been indicated in previous responses both to motions/questions and in the Audit Reports, this work is being addressed as part of a national procurement exercise, the outcome of which is awaited by the Council.

The second category of reference/recommendation does not relate to tendering but rather relates to the process by which the Council pays for goods received. These recommendations have been accepted by the Council, are being addressed and will be closed out as part of the implementation of the introduction of a new national Financial Management System due for roll-out in Donegal during 2016.

It is important to note that there is no suggestion that goods/services were procured or purchased inappropriately, or without the appropriate sanction.

For reference, included below is a commentary from the Auditor in the 2014 report relating to his examination of a sample of files with regard to tendering compliance where he references that best practice is being employed.

“A sample of tendering processes was examined during the course of the audit and it was found that they complied with best practise”

As a consequence, when any allegation is made of tendering irregularities, the Council requires supporting evidence to be produced so that it may investigate accordingly.

C/444/15 FINANCIAL DIVIDENDS FROM THE WHOLE SYSTEM OF WORK

The following question was submitted by Cllr Quinn:-

"Has this Council given up on the prospect of ever realising a financial dividend from the extremely expensive Whole System of Work?"

Cllr Quinn was informed that:-

It is confirmed that Donegal Co. Council is not engaged in any ongoing work with One Sigma Ltd in relation the Whole System of Work and has not been for a considerable period. It is also confirmed that no expenditure has been incurred over the past number of years in relation to same.

As confirmed in reply to a previous question in this matter, the Council has not received any monies from State Agencies or other bodies in connection with the Whole System of Work.

C/445/15 COUNCIL'S ROLE IN THE ACCURACY OF THE REGISTER OF ELECTORS

The following question was submitted by Cllr Quinn:-

What role does the Council have in order to ensure the accuracy of the Register of Electors?"

Cllr Quinn was informed that:-

“Local Authorities maintain the Electoral Register and associated Supplements to the Electoral Register as agents on behalf of the Franchise Department in the Department of the Environment.

In order to ensure the accuracy of the Register to the greatest extent possible, Donegal County Council engages the services of 14 Field Workers assigned to different areas of the County who carry out house to house or other appropriate enquiries on a yearly basis to ensure that the Register is kept up to date.

At the end of August each year, the Council places an advertisement in the local newspapers advising members of the public that we are in the process of updating the Register of Electors and advising them to check the Register and to let us know if they are not included.

The Field Workers submit their data to the Franchise Office in Lifford in mid September each year, this data is entered and from this the Draft Register is published on 1st of November each year. This Draft Register is widely circulated throughout the County in Garda Stations, Post Offices, Public Libraries and Public Services Centres and is also available for checking online. An advertisement is placed again on 1st November in the Local Newspapers urging Electors to check this Draft Register to ensure that they are included correctly.

Copies of the Draft Register are also sent to Garda Sergeants and to members of Donegal County Council for checking and making any changes that they see necessary. Corrections can be made to the Draft Register up until the 25th November.

Following corrections to the Draft Register the list of Claims is published on 30th November and is circulated to the same Public

Offices as the Draft Register for members of the public to check. Revision Sittings are held during December in various locations throughout the County during which the County Registrar adjudicates on all claims received. The dates, times and locations of the Revision Sittings are advertised in the Local Papers so that people can attend if they wish to make any corrections to the list of Claims.

The Live Register is published on 1st February and again is circulated to public offices and an advertisement is placed again in the local newspapers urging people to check the Live Register and advising that anyone who is not included in the Live Register can apply for inclusion in the Supplement to the Register. Application for inclusion in the supplement to the register can be made up until 15 working days before polling day.”

C/446/15 CONFIRMATION OF THE LEVEL OF OCCUPATION OF COUNCIL OFFICE SPACE BY IRISH WATER STAFF

The following question was submitted by Cllr Shiels:-

"Can the Council confirm how many of its Public Services Centres are presently partially occupied by staff of Irish Water and give details of what Council office space is actually presently occupied by Irish Water."

Cllr Shiels was informed that:-

Donegal County Council formally approved the leasing of Office Accommodation to Irish Water in the Donegal PSC, by way of Section 183 resolution, at the July 2015 meeting of the Council.

The details of the lease are as follows:

1. Period of lease is 10 years which commenced on 2nd July, 2015.
2. The office accommodation consists of approximately 181 square meters and is located on the lower ground floor of the Donegal Town Public Services Centre.
3. As part of the leasing arrangements, Irish Water employees based in the Donegal PSC, will have shared access to the common areas of the Public Services Centre.

The Council does not have any formal arrangements in place with Irish Water with regard to office accommodation at any of the other Public Services Centres.

C/447/15 CONFIRMATION OF THE NUMBER OF SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS IN THE COUNTY FOR 2015

The following question was submitted by Cllr Brogan:-

Can this Council confirm the number of Specific Improvement Projects that it is progressing county-wide in 2015 and set out the timescale to complete these jobs?"

Cllr Brogan was informed that:-

While the Department of Transport has suspended the Specific Improvement Grants, the Council has obtained special approval for the following three projects in 2015:

1. MullantiBoyle Bridge
2. Cockhill Bridge
3. Woodlands Pavement

#### MullantiBoyle Bridge

This bridge near Glenties had collapsed a few years ago and the Department approved funding for replacing the bridge earlier this year. The Council already had the design ready and planning permission. The project has been tendered and the contract is currently being awarded with work expected to commence shortly on-site.

#### Cockhill Bridge

The Department a couple of months ago approved funding for a new bridge at Cockhill. It already has planning permission and river approvals. We are currently acquiring the necessary land and making minor revisions to the design. Construction can start on the approach roads as soon as the land is secured.

#### Woodlands Pavement

This job has been tendered and the winning contractor has been selected recently. It will provide for completion of the remaining 0.65 kms of roadway from Woodlands to the Silver Tassie. It is expected that the contractor will start work in early October and finish by end November. The cost of the works is estimated to be approximately €345,000.

C/448/15 OUTLINE OF NEW ROAD ALIGNMENT PROJECTS  
COUNTY WIDE THAT THE NRA HAVE APPROVED IN  
DONEGAL IN 2015

The following question was submitted by Cllr Brogan:-

"Can Donegal County Council outline what new road alignment projects county-wide that the NRA have approved in Donegal in 2015. I'm aware of the N15 at Blackburn Bridge job, the Gweebarra Bends on the N56 and I believe the Council has been informed that the Unifi/Kiltoy Roundabout and Road Improvements are being given the go ahead for design and construction. Can the Council confirm the details of the programme of works and the timescale involved for these projects?"

Cllr Brogan was informed that:-

“The NRA (now known as TII) have approved the following three Road Alignment Projects in 2015:

1. N15 Blackburn Bridge Project
2. N56 Gweebarra Bends Project
3. N56 Kiltoy/UNIFI Roundabout

**N15 Blackburn Bridge Project**

This project consists of the realignment of approximately 2.4 kms of the Route N15 south of Ballybofey. Contracts were approved and signed in June 2015 and the Contractor is currently on-site constructing the project. The tendered contract value is approximately € 5.25m and it is anticipated that the job will open to traffic in July 2016.

**N56 Boyoughter to Kilkenny Project (including the Gweebarra Bends)**

This project consists of the realignment of approximately 4.9kms of the Route N56 in the vicinity of Gweebarra Bends. Contracts were approved and signed in June 2015 and the Contractor is currently on-site constructing the project. The tendered contract value is approximately € 7.7m and it is anticipated that the job will open to traffic in Jan 2017.

**N56 Kiltoy/UNIFI Roundabout**

The TII have recently approved the advancement of the Kiltoy Roundabout and associated link road to connect directly to the IDA

Business Park. This is a much needed local improvement on this road and will remove the existing “dog-leg” alignment and associated traffic difficulties. The Council have previously acquired the lands required through the UNIFI Site and the project has already Part 8 Planning Permission in place. The TII have already stated that they will fund the project through all the design and construction steps and have provide sufficient monies in 2015 for the design work that will be undertaken. The Council is currently preparing the final design documents, which will be followed by the tender stage. It is hoped that the project will go to construction in 2016. The TII will provide the construction monies at the construction stage.”

C/449/15     RESULTS OF THE ROAD CONDITIONING SURVEY FOR EACH MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

The following question was submitted by Cllr Gary Doherty:-

"Can this Council provide me, in tabular form, the results of the road conditioning survey from each of the five Municipal Districts?"

Cllr Doherty was informed that:-

“Pavement Surface Condition Index (PSCI) surveys are in progress across the county and surveys in each Municipal District are at various stages of completion. The surveys have yet to be assessed for consistency across MDs. The PSCI surveys are a 'work in progress' and are not considered to be sufficiently complete to permit general release. The surveys are useful within individual MD's to look at the relative scoring among roads in the area as usually they have been rated by MD staff who would be consistent within an MD but not necessarily consistent with separate MDs done by separate people. When the surveys are completed, summary details can be produced comparing the ratings of the various road classes across the MDs.”

C/450/15     CROSS PARTY DELEGATION TO MEET TAOISEACH, FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER TO FURTHER THE A5 PROJECT

The following question was submitted by Cllr Gary Doherty:-

"Will this Council seek to secure a cross-party delegation meeting with An Taoiseach and the First and Deputy First Ministers to

outline our support for the A5 Project and the absolute need for this project to progress?"

Cllr Doherty was informed that:-

“The Council is committed to taking any steps that support the A5 Project and the overall Dublin to Derry/Letterkenny Route. The Council has been lobbying and supporting the development of this route for over ten years. The Council has attended a number of delegation meetings with both the Ministers for Transport in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland over the past number of years. The last meeting was in January 2015. The Council Executive is happy to formally request the above delegations after they are agreed by Council.”

C/451/15 OUTLINE ON THE PROGRESS WITH THE A5, BALLYBOFEY/STRANORLAR BYPASS AND THE LIFFORD TO MANOR NP MAJOR PROJECTS

The following question was submitted by Cllr McGowan:-

"Can the Council outline what progress there has been lately with the A5 the Ballybofey & Stranorlar Bypass and the Lifford to Manor NP major projects and outline any meeting with Government Officials North or South including any plans or funding for the N13, N14, and N15?"

Cllr McGowan was informed that:-

“There is little new progress to report on the A5 Western transportation Corridor in Northern Ireland, as the EIS and Revised Vesting Order which are required to progress the Statutory Procedures have not yet been published by the Department of Regional Development in Northern Ireland. Publication of same was expected in mid June 2015.

Work on the proposed N13/N15 Ballybofey & Stranorlar Bypass and the proposed N14 Manor to Lifford Realignment continues to be suspended due to the financial downturn. The TII have commissioned a Corridor Route Needs Study on the TEN-T road network North of the end of the N15 Blackburn Bridge Realignment Scheme, phase 1 of which is currently under construction. The network has been divided into sections for assessment purposes and these sections include the proposed major

projects as outlined above. The Study when finalised will prioritise the sections of the TEN -T Network for improvement to the required standards. Amendments to the initial draft of the study submitted to TII in May are being developed and it is hoped to have the study finalised in October. The next stage will be to develop a project or projects from the prioritised list through the Statutory Procedures and on to construction subject to TII approval and funding.

No recent meeting with Government Officials North or South have taken place regarding funding to the A5, N13, N14 or N15. However, the Council have ongoing meetings with TII on the development of a number of projects. In addition, we met the Minister for Transport (Dublin) in February 2015 and the Minister for Transport (Belfast) in January 2015. The Council have separately requested a delegation to meet TII which hopefully will occur before the end of 2015.”

C/452/15 REQUEST FOR OUTLINE OF THE BENEFITS THE COUNTY ENJOYED THROUGH PEACE PROGRAMMES AND EU FUNDING

The following question was submitted by Cllr McGowan:-

"Please can the Council outline the benefits this County acquired from the Peace Programmes and other EU funding and show in clear terms what plans there are to avail of these benefits in the future, this will also mean supporting the EU funding office within the Council which was developed and strengthened approximately 10 years ago?"

Cllr McGowan was informed that:-

“A key role for the Council’s European Funding and Policy unit is to maximise opportunities to attract external funding to the county and wider region. During the period 2007-2013, the Council undertook as lead and project partner a range of funded projects with support in particular from the Interreg IVA programme. These projects involved collaborations with partners in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and spanned a range of sectors – marine tourism, marine leisure, community enterprise, walks and trails development, community development, rural development, renewable energies, tourism product development, enterprise and entrepreneurship. The new EU funding programmes for 2017-

2020 have been announced, and the Unit continues to work in a proactive manner to attract resources to the County and region. In 2015 three new EU funded projects have been supported – Project Cool Route, Project WildSea Europe and Project LADDER. Donegal County Council is a partner in these projects which are dealing with the promotion of sailing and marine tourism; exploiting the unique biodiversity and coastal resources of the county; and global development education.

Several bids have been lodged to other EU funding programmes in 2015 and a decision is awaited on their approval or otherwise. These bids are in the areas of independent living; heritage and coastal maritime assets and walks and trails development. In the coming period, the Council will continue to target opportunities to participate in bids to the Interreg VB transnational funding streams, including in particular the Northern Periphery and Arctic programme, Atlantic Area Programme, Interreg Europe and North West Europe.

The SEUPB have also announced details of the cross border Interreg VA programme. The EU Unit has established key cross border linkages in the context of the Interreg V programme and cross border / inter-regional collaborations, including links with Questor (Queen's University Belfast), CASE (Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy) located at QUB, Centre for Cross Border Studies, Northern Ireland local authorities/government departments and AFBI (Agri food and Biosciences Institute). Given the location of County Donegal within the cross border region, the cross border programmes are of particular interest and will hopefully provide valuable resources to support the economic, social and cultural development of the County.

Donegal County Council has also continued to develop links with European networks of interest and benefit, including the Assembly of European regions (AER), FEDETON (European destinations for Nautical Tourism), Irish Regions Office, North and Western Regional Assembly, CORAL (Community of Regions for Assisted living), and Atlantic Arc Cities (CPMR). The Unit also attends information briefings and events on a regular basis to ensure accurate and comprehensive data and information is available on EU funding and opportunities for local authorities.”

C/453/15 ASSESSMENT OF RIVERS FOR DREDGING AND FLOOD CONTROL

The following question was submitted by Cllr O'Domhnaill:-

" Can this Council support and implement a programme whereby rivers which the Council have responsibility for are assessed and dredging works carried out to alleviate flooding in these areas and where necessary?"

Cllr O'Domhnaill was informed that:-

“The Council do not have responsibility for rivers in the county and do not undertake works on watercourses other than for the maintenance of road crossings (bridges, sluverts, pipes, etc.) or where such watercourses are piped through towns and villages. The OPW are the normal body who have responsibility and expertise in this area and are quite active on certain rivers. Any proposals to dredge watercourses would need to be assessed both from environmental and hydraulic impact perspectives. The Council do not have expertise in these areas and would need to employ external specialists before any work could be done.

The Council has powers under the Roads Act to access private lands to maintain watercourses to alleviate flooding mainly along roads. Notwithstanding this, maintenance of watercourses is not normal work for the Council, it is likely to be expensive and widespread across the county and it is not budgeted for annually.

It is understood that there is a particular concern about Ray River in Falcarragh and Glenea River in Gortahork and the Council will write to both OPW and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to obtain their views on what can be done in such situations.”

C/454/15 OUTLINE OF THE CORRESPONDENCE BY THIS COUNCIL BOTH INTERNALLY AND WITH OUTSIDE BODIES REGARDING COASTAL EROSION IN COUNTY DONEGAL

The following question was submitted by Cllr Gallagher:-

“Can this Council give a detailed timeline and supply all correspondence within Council and with outside bodies regarding coastal erosion at various locations throughout the County?”

Cllr Gallagher was informed that:-

“The records sought involving the exchange of correspondence between the Council and other agencies in relation to coastal erosion at various locations in the County can be collated but this work will take some time given the scope of the information being sought. If there are particular locations/periods that could be specified this could enable the collating of information to be prioritised on that basis.”

C/455/15 TIMEFRAME FOR THE RELEASE OF THE NEXT TRANCHE OF LEADER FUNDING IN DONEGAL

The following question was submitted by Cllr O’Domhnaill:-

"Can this Council advise when the next tranche of Leader funding will be available in Donegal, When will applications be accepted, when will the first grants approvals be made in regards to these applications and what level of funding will be available to Donegal per year over the lifetime of the Programme?"

Cllr O’Domhnaill was informed that:-

“The Donegal Region has been allocated €12,913,878 under the LEADER Programme for the period 2014-2020. Following an Expression of Interest submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine the Donegal Local Community Development Committee has been selected as the Local Action Group for the delivery of the LEADER Programme in County Donegal for the period 2015-2020.

At present the LCDC is preparing a Local Development Strategy for the County in conjunction with the Local Development Companies in line with the guidelines provided by the Department. It is hoped that the Local Development Strategy will be completed and submitted before the end of the year.

The LCDC envisage Inishowen Development Partnership, Donegal Local Development Company, Údarás and Comhar na nOileán as the lead implementation bodies for the delivery of the LEADER programme. The programme will open locally following the approval of the Local Development Strategy by the Department.”

C/456/15 SUBSIDENCE IN COUNCIL HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

The following question was submitted by Cllr MacGiolla Easbuig:-

“Cá mhéad cás de thurnamh talún a tharla ar fhorbairtí tithíochta de chuid na Comhairle le cúig bliana déag anuas, cad iad na heastáit, cad é mar a réitíodh iad agus cén costas a bhí ar achan cheann acu?”

"How many instances of subsidence in council housing developments have taken place in the last fifteen years, which estates, how were they resolved and how much did each cost?"

Cllr MacGiollas Easbuig was informed that:-

“Níl ach líon beag tuairiscí i dtaca le Turnamh Talún / Socrú Talún i bhForbairtí Tithíochta de chuid na Comhairle le cúig bliana déag anuas.

I ndiaidh an scéal a fhiosrú in achan cheann de na Ceantracha Bardais, tá tugtha faoi deara gur phléigh an Chomhairle le cás amháin i gCeantar Bardais Leitir Ceanainn, agus go bhfuil an Chomhairle faoi láthair i mbun scrúdú a dhéanamh ar eastát áirithe amháin i gCeantar Bardais na nGleantach a bhfuil inní ina leith ó thaobh turnamh / socrú talún a d'fhéadfadh a bheith ar an suíomh. Níl an scrúdú seo ach ina thús agus dá bharr sin níl an Chomhairle in ann na mionsonraí ar fad atá á lorg a chur ar fáil ag an am seo.

Pléadh le forbairt tithíochta eile i gCeantar Bardais na nGleantach inar tharla deacrachtaí i dtaca leis na bóithre agus na seirbhísí a bhí ar freastal ar fhorbairt tithíochta ar shuíomh a raibh móin agus portach ann. Tá críoch curtha leis na hoibreacha cóirithe ar an suíomh seo agus tá an scéim go hiomlán ligthe.

There are limited reports of Subsidence / Settlement in Council Housing Developments over the past 15 years

Having sought out the position in each of the Municipal Districts, it is noted that the Council has dealt with one case in the Letterkenny Municipal District and at present the Council is examining a particular estate in the Glenties Municipal District where some concerns exists with regard to potential subsidence / settlement on the site. This examination is at an early stage and as a consequence,

the Council is not in a position to provide the level of detail sought at this time.

A further housing development in the Glenties Municipal District has also been addressed where difficulties emerged with the roads and services serving a housing development on a site where there was peat and bog present. The remedial works to this site have been completed and the scheme is fully let.”

C/457/15 BREAKDOWN OF THE NUMBER OF RETAINED FIREMEN IN THE COUNTY

The following question was submitted by Cllr MacGiolla Easbuig:-

“An dtig le Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall briseadh síos a thabhairt de líon na dtinteoirí (comhraiceoirí dóiteáin) coinnithe atá in achan limistéar stáisiún dóiteáin sa chontae, liosta de na seirbhísí deonacha dóiteáin atá sa chontae, agus na ceantracha ina bhfuil gá le stáisiúin úra dóiteáin.”

To ask that Donegal County Council provide a breakdown of the number of retained firemen in each of the fire station areas in the county, a list of the voluntary fire services in the county and the areas where new fire stations are required?"

Cllr MacGiolla Easbuig was informed that:-

**Retained Fire Brigades**

<b>Brigade</b>	<b>Crew Complement</b>
Letterkenny	15
Buncrana	15
Carndonagh	9
Moville	9
Stranorlar	9
Donegal Town	9
Ballyshannon	9
Bundoran	9
Killybegs	9
Glenties	9
Dungloe	9
Gweedore	9

Falcarragh	9
Milford	9
Glencolmcille	8

New Fire Stations have been built for each of the above brigades with the exception of the following:

- Ballyshannon
- Bundoran
- Glencolmcille

**Voluntary Fire Services**

- Aran Mor Island
- Tory Island”

C/458/15 CONFIRMATION OF THE TIMELINE FOR THE DELIVERY OF TIER TWO TOWN PLANS

The following question was submitted by Cllr Gallagher:-

"Can this Council provide a detailed timeline for the delivery of Tier Two Town Plans?"

Cllr Gallagher was informed that:-

The provision of a definitive detailed timeline for the completion of the Local Area Plan for the Tier 2 Towns of Ballybofey-Stranorlar, Ballyshannon, Bridgend, Carndonagh, Donegal Town, Dungloe and Killybegs, is predicated upon a number of variables so that it is difficult to be definitive about timelines at this stage of the process. However, that being said, work has already commenced with the completion of the preliminary public consultation earlier this month and the broad headline timelines that are being worked towards leads to completion by end Quarter 2, 2016. Notwithstanding, the indicative timelines that are being pursued are set out below.

Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and separately Appropriate Assessment (AA) has also been completed. It has been determined that both Assessments are required. The scoping exercise that determines the parameters of these assessments has now been commenced this month through formal

consultation with the statutory authorities and this shall guide the scale of the assessment that is necessary to be undertaken. Work within the next period up to early Q1 2016 will include the preparation of the SEA , AA and preparation of the draft plan working document, which shall be informed by information and data gathering, consultations with all the stakeholders, such as public agencies, community and business groups, elected members etc. The outcome of this work, including SEA and AA, will inform the date for consideration of the draft plan by Members but the January Meeting of council is being targeted. Upon Members agreement to the publication of the draft Plan, the following formal timelines will be triggered:

- 6 Week (Minimum)- Public consultation
- 6 week (Maximum) – Completion of Report on Submissions
- 6 week (Maximum) – Consideration by Members

In the event that members decide to make further amendments that are material changes then the implication for SEA and AA have to be considered. If the changes do necessitate further SEA and AA then when that work is complete the changes and SEA and AA report will go on public display, which triggers the following timelines:

- 4 Week (Minimum)- Public consultation
- 4 week (Maximum) – Completion of Report on Submissions
- 6 week (Maximum) – Consideration by Members

C/459/15 MICA/DEFECTIVE BLOCK ASSESSMENT OF THE COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK FOR ALL MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS TO PROVIDE A FULL REPORT FOR PRESENTATION BY CROSS PARTY DELEGATION TO MINISTER ALAN KELLY

The following question was submitted by Cllr Albert Doherty:-

"Has the Council and the Director of Housing conducted and or instigated an investigation for existence of Mica/Defective block in all Electoral Areas Council Housing Stock to ensure a comprehensive report is compiled for presentation by Cross Party Council Delegation to Minister Alan Kelly?"

Cllr Doherty was informed that:-

“In relation to the Presence of Muscovite MICA in Council Housing Stock, the Chief Executive provided an update in his

Monthly Management Report to Council at the July 2015 meeting. This extract is appended to this reply.

Since that time as indicated in the Chief Executive's report, arrangements have been made to carry out the detailed testing to the sub-floor blocks in the three locations previously identified. The Council is seeking to have the results of these tests available at the earliest possible opportunity but indications are that it will be late September / early October.

On receipt of same, the Council will be in a position to determine the level and extent of remedial works that will be necessary.

Arrangements have also been made to engage with Housing Maintenance staff in the other Electoral Areas in the County with a view to establishing the extent of the presence of Muscovite MICA in our Housing Stock across the County. As previously noted, the presence of some cracking in external walls is common place and does not in itself indicate the presence of MICA or defective blocks. The initial findings are that at this time, the presence of Muscovite MICA in our Housing Stock in the Glenties, Donegal and Stranorlar Municipal Districts is not presenting as a cause for concern. A number of potential cases have been reported in the Letterkenny Municipal District and these cases are subject to further examination at present.

It is accepted that a comprehensive report is required and it will be evident to all that the tests already carried out, together with the current testing being conducted will inform this report together with the assessment from each Municipal District."

C/460/15 COUNCIL INPUT AND FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSING MANAGEMENT COMPANIES WHERE COUNCIL LEASES EXIST

The following question was submitted by Cllr Albert Doherty:-

"How many houses county-wide have been secured by lease and as a consequence, in how many cases are the Council shareholders in management companies, how much is Council contributing to what number of Housing Management Companies?"

Cllr Doherty was informed that:-

“A total of 175 houses have been secured by lease with the Council having a responsibility to three Management Companies in respect of a total of eight units. These relate to units secured by the dissolved authorities and the annual charge is €200 per unit in all cases. Payment of the Management Company charge is dependant on an operational Company being in existence and being tax compliant.

As part of the overall terms of the Long Term Leasing arrangements, as issued by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government, it is Council policy that the owner of the property retains responsibility for the payment of the Management Company service charges and any other charge for which the property owner is liable.”

C/461/15 OUTLINE OF THE SPECIAL CHARGES AS LEVIED BY PLANNING ON WINDFARM CONSTRUCTION

The following question was submitted by Cllr Murray:-

"In the light of the huge profits being made by wind turbine owners and given that other Councils are charging up to €18,000 a turbine in development levies, will the planning department do a comparative study between the Donegal Council Special Charges and other Councils Development Contribution Schemes to identify if the council is getting the best deal for the people of Donegal?"

Cllr Murray was informed that:-

“The Development Contribution Scheme (DCS) for the County is currently under review and, when adopted, it will supersede the DCS for the three former Town Councils and the County Council (ie. it will be a Countywide DCS). It was agreed at the July Council Meeting to hold a workshop on 29th September at 10AM to consider same, as recommended by the Economic, Enterprise and Planning Policy Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 30th June 2015. The recommendation to make provisions for a contribution in respect of wind energy proposals in the new draft Development Contribution Scheme is one of the issues to be considered at that workshop and in that regard comparisons with the amount levied in respect of wind energy proposals by other Councils will be presented to Members.”

C/462/15

COMPARSION BETWEEN THE DONEGAL COUNCIL  
SPECIAL CHARGES AND OTHER COUNCILS  
DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION SCHEMES

The following question was submitted by Cllr Murray:-

"Do the Special Charges that are being levied on wind farms only cover the specific costs of work needed to build the wind farms or is there a contribution on top of that, that is for other community infrastructure and facilities, and if so, how is it calculated and how can Councillors monitor it?"

Cllr Murray was informed that:-

“While wind energy projects are not directly provided for within the terms of the current Development Contribution Scheme, these projects are subject to a case-by-case assessment of the local infrastructural needs [e.g. local roads & bridges etc] that subsequently informs decisions on the appropriate application of specific charges. Specific charges are applied when the needs are assessed in each individual case as opposed to the general scale of charges outlined in the Development Contribution Scheme for other generic classes of development. The charges that are applied reflect the scale of investment required in local infrastructure arising from the impact of any such development. The extent of specific development charges on wind energy planning permissions is being examined and this information will be circulated to Members separately in the near future.”

C/463/15

MOTIONS FROM OTHER COUNCILS/BODIES

Members noted the following Motions from other Councils:-

CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

“In view of the extreme shortage of housing in County Clare and the difficulties elected members have in fully engaging with the process, I am asking the CEO of Clare County Council, the Commissioner for Data Protection, the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Housing – what specific legal provisions are there to prevent members of this Council from accessing information held by the local authority with regard to housing policy, housing provision, housing allocation and any other housing matters, and to address any such legislative anomalies so as to remove restrictions on local authority members fully exercising their mandated role as public representatives.”

LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL

“That, the relevant Ministers for Agriculture and Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht are contacted about the unsatisfactory situation regarding the marketability of lands designated for the hen harrier; in particular, where a farmer wants to upgrade his/her farm by purchasing non-designated agricultural lands from the sale proceeds of the designated land, that we call on the state to either purchase the relevant land at forestry value or remove the designation so the forestry companies can purchase and plant same.”

LEITRIM COUNTY COUNCIL

“That Leitrim County Council write to the Minister for Agriculture, Mr Simon Coveney not to implement the new regulations in regard to farmers having to get Planning Permission to replace existing fencing or when erecting new fences on their lands.”

LEITRIM COUNTY COUNCIL

“That Leitrim County Council call on the Department of Agriculture and Minister Simon Coveney to reverse, the unjust Single Farm Payment cuts and penalties imposed on farmers, in marginal and disadvantaged areas across rural Ireland. Many farmers are struggling to survive, with loss of income and penalties imposed on farm land which had been actively farmed and properly maintained for generations but was deemed ineligible and not fit for farming in 2013. I also call on the Minister to cease all Land eligibility, ground and aerial satellite inspections, until this unfair situation is resolved.”

SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL

“Sligo County Council calls on the Minister for Finance to return to the Dail with an open mind and listen to the very real concerns of T.D.s before he signs new Regulations into law on the remaining Sections of the 2012 Credit Union Act.”

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**Certified:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Cathaoirleach.**

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

