

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL HELD  
ON 27<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2022 IN THE AURA LEISURE CENTRE LETTERKENNY**

C/235/22

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Cllrs J Murray, Cathaoirleach, L Blaney, K Bradley, C. Brogan, P Canning, T. Conaghan, D. Coyle, G. Crawford, N. Crossan, T Crossan, A. Doherty, G Doherty, L Doherty, R. Donaghey, M Farren, M. T. Gallagher, M Harley, N. Jordan, D M. Kelly, N Kennedy, F Mc Brearty Jnr, M Mc Bride, M Mc Clafferty, M. McDermott, I McGarvey, N. Mc Garvey, P. Mc Gowan, M. Mc Mahon, G. Mc Monagle, A Molloy, M Naughton, J. O Donnell, and J S O' Fearraigh.  
*Online:* J. Kavanagh, J. Mc Guinness.

C/236/22

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Micheál C Mac Giolla Easbuig and Cllr Barry Sweeny who were unable to attend the meeting.

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**OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE**

John Mc Laughlin, Chief Executive, Patsy Lafferty, Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services/Meetings Administrator, Garry Martin, Director of Economic Development, Information Systems & Emergency Services, Richard Gibson, Head of Finance, Liam Ward, Director Community Development & Planning Services, Bryan Cannon, A/Director of Roads & Transportation, Michael Mc Garvey, A/Director of Water & Environment, Frances Friel, Communications Officer Seán O' Daimhin, Rannóg na Gaeltachta, Róise Ní Laifearthaigh, Rannóg na Gaeilge, Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer.

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**Vote of Sympathy**

A vote of sympathy was extended to the family and colleagues of the late Lorna Doherty formerly Library Service.

A minute's silence was observed by all in attendance.

The Chief Executive on behalf of the Senior Management Team and the staff of Donegal County Council extended sincere condolences to the Doherty family.

C/239/22

**INTER-AGENCY RESPONSE TO THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS**

Members considered the report circulated with the agenda in relation to

The Cathaoirleach confirmed that there were a number of presentations to be made and reminded members of the time limit involved, given that the Annual General Meeting was scheduled to start at 3.00pm.

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**ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING**

Cllr Terry Crossan at this juncture indicated that he was being verbally abused by Cllr Mc Brearty.

The Cathaoirleach asked that respect be shown in the chamber given the seriousness of the issue under discussion. There was further interruption from Cllr Mc Brearty and he thus he adjourned the meeting for a short recess.

C/241/22

### **INTER-AGENCY RESPONSE TO THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS**

The Cathaoirleach paid tribute to all involved in the relief effort and thanked the people of Donegal for their heroic response and empathy in ensuring that those fleeing the war in Ukraine were warmly welcomed to Donegal.

The Chief Executive alluded to the national structures that had been put in place to deal with the crisis and referenced the fact that Local Authorities had been asked to assist in two specific areas namely,

1. Identify potential accommodation options and provide details to IPAS.
2. Establish a Community Forum to co-ordinate the provision of supports and services.

He noted that two number senior staff had been assigned to co-ordinate the response and bring the relevant queries to central Government. It was apparent, he added, that there were many challenges involved but that the process would also ultimately provide a number of opportunities. He thanked the members of the public who had helped with offers of accommodation and the overall community response which had been overwhelming.

Mr Liam Ward, Director Community Development & Planning Services drew attention to the briefing document circulated prior to the meeting.

He provided an overview of the situation and efforts made to date to deal with the influx of Ukrainian refugees. There was acknowledgement also of the structure and supports in place at national level.

Members were informed that 1657 Ukrainian Nationals had been accommodated to date in the County and that the response of the Community Forum to date had involved mutual co-operation together with the co-ordinating and sharing of information amongst the various agencies both statutory and non-statutory. It was noted that there were many challenges involved and that the situation was continually evolving. The main areas of challenge to date it was noted were:

- Supply of accommodation
- Resourcing issues in terms of financial and staffing supports.
- Transportation difficulties.
- Access to information on a timely basis and in accordance with GDPR requirements.

Members received a number of presentations and an update on their involvement to date from the principal response agencies. These included:

- Mr Padraic Fingleton on behalf of Donegal Local Development Company.
- Mr Barry Mc Loughlin on behalf of Inishowen Development Partnership.
- Mr Paul Kernan on behalf of the Intercultural Platform.
- Mr Raymond Mackey on behalf of the Irish Red Cross.
- Ms Trish Garland on behalf of the Health Service Executive.
- Mr Marty Keeny on behalf of TUSLA.
- Mr Eamon Ryan on behalf of the Education and Training Board/ Department of Education.
- Anne Keegan on behalf of the Department of Social Protection.

Apologies were received from Ms Fidelma Doherty, Local Link who was unable to attend the meeting. It was noted that the Local Link presentation had been circulated as part of the briefing document.

Mr Liam Ward, Director Community Development & Planning Services thanked all the agencies concerned for the updates and said that the presentations were reflective of the principal response effort. He acknowledged that there were a significant number of other agencies involved including the Donegal Youth Services, the Donegal County Childcare Committee, Donegal Women's Network, St Vincent De Paul, Lifestart, Donegal Tourism Project, the Donegal Local Community Development Committee and the Gardaí.

The Cathaoirleach thanked all who had delivered the various presentations and acknowledged the fact that a co-ordinated response to deal with the situation was in place. Conscious of the time constraints, he called on members to keep their comments to the point and succinct. Responses to any queries that arose, he confirmed, would be provided in writing following the meeting.

Cllr Mc Brearty thanked all for their informative presentations and said that the crisis clearly demonstrated the fact that democracy was under attack. He said that he had every sympathy for the people of Ukraine and that they were continually in his thoughts and prayers. As a victim of Garda corruption and state corruption, he said, that he could easily identify with their plight. He said however that he was disappointed that the Cathaoirleach had used the meeting as a platform to promote Sinn Fein views and called on the party to publicly condemn Russia for the inhuman conflict that it had unleashed on the Ukrainian people. He said that he was always available to help the people of Ukraine and that his door was always open to victims of corruption.

Cllr G Doherty noted that all the Ukrainian people who had come to Donegal had received a very warm welcome but accepted that there

were several challenges to be overcome. He raised the following issues:

1. Query as to what the difference was in terms of accommodation services provided for Ukrainian refugees compared to those refugees who were placed in Direct Provision. He said that he did not want to see a situation where industrial scale profiteering expanded as a result of the situation, and that it was imperative that suitable facilities were provided.
2. What are the criteria for accommodation providers in terms of (a) vetting and (b) contractual obligations and for how long?
3. Issues at hand to deal with safeguarding issues. What plans are in place to extend child safeguarding training to accommodation providers together with a system of Garda vetting. and what is the long-term solution to such issues.
4. Alluding to the education sector and the fact that pinch points had been identified in Bundoran and Letterkenny, Cllr Doherty noted that many schools in Donegal were operating at capacity prior to refugees arriving. He asked what challenges were anticipated going forward within the education sector.

Cllr Harley asked that a response be provided in relation to the various issues raised. He asked what funding was available to assist community groups set up various programmes and activities under the Community Integration Programme. This was something, he added, that could be rolled out to other nationalities. He enquired also in relation to the running of English Language Summer Schools which would be of benefit to children going to National School in September 2022.

Cllr Kennedy alluded also to the issue of Direct Provision and the fact that there were concerns to be addressed with regard to the delivery of this programme. She enquired also as to what was being done to integrate children into sporting facilities etc.

Cllr Brogan welcomed the updates provided and noted that the effort to date was a primary example of all working for the common good. He thanked all concerned for their efforts.

Cllr Mc Bride said that he was delighted to hear that additional SICAP funding was anticipated in respect of the Ukrainian response as the extent of the work carried out by the Donegal Local Development Company to date was significant. This, he added, had placed a considerable burden on certain staff members. It was imperative, he said, that when the funding became available that specific consideration was given to providing help for the staff members concerned.

He referred to the fact that members of the public had made offers of accommodation yet had heard nothing in the interim. He queried the

reason for this delay. There was a similar problem, he advised, with in terms of those who had made offers of property for re-housing and the fact that people were having difficulty contacting the agencies responsible.

He asked that the numbers and website details for all the agencies concerned be placed on the DCC website.

Concluding, Cllr Mc Bride asked what the percentage growth over and above the level of the indigenous community which would allow the local communities concerned to absorb specific numbers of refugees.

The Cathaoirleach thanked all who had contributed to the meeting. He said that it was a changing and challenging situation and that answers to the questions would be circulated. It was hoped also, he added, to have another meeting dedicated to the matter in a few months' time.

This concluded the business of the meeting.