

Miontuairiscí/ Meeting Minutes

Ordinary Meeting

29th January 2024 @ 1.30p.m.

European Commission Offices, Grange, Co. Meath

Presiding

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Tommy Reilly

Councillors Present:

Councillors Yemi Adenuga, Tom Behan, Joseph Bonner, Mike Bray, Eugene Cassidy, Aisling Dempsey, Sean Drew, Edward Fennessy, Brian Fitzgerald, Joe Fox, Noel French, Michael Gallagher, Deirdre Geraghty-Smith, David Gilroy, Trevor Golden, Wayne Harding, Suzanne Jamal, Geraldine Keogan, Nick Killian, Alan Lawes, Paul McCabe, Elaine McGinty, Paddy Meade, Helen Meyer, Ronan Moore, Maria Murphy, Gerry O'Connor, Caroline O'Reilly, Sarah Reilly, Amanda Smith, Niamh Souhan, Emer Tóibín, Sharon Tolan, Gillian Toole, Conor Tormey.

Apologies: Councillors Francis Deane, Pdraig Fitzsimons, Stephen McKee, Alan Tobin.

Officials in attendance:

Chief Executive: Kieran Kehoe

Directors of Service: Des Foley, Fiona Lawless, Barry Lynch, Dara McGowan, Fiona Fallon

Acting Director of Service: Nicholas Whyatt

Meetings Administrator: Elaine Daly

Planning Section: Pdraig Maguire, Senior Planner; Alan Russell, Senior Executive Planner

Environment Section: Mary Darcy, Climate Change Co-Ordinator and Peter Olwell, Climate Action Officer

Apologies:

Martin Murray, Director of Services

Ms. Maria Pilar Aguar Fernandez, Director of Health and Food Audits and Analysis welcomed the Elected Members and officials of the Council to the European Commission Headquarters. **An Cathaoirleach** thanked Ms. Aguar Fernandez for the invitation and for her hospitality. He noted that the ongoing support between the two organisations would continue.

An Cathaoirleach, on behalf of the Elected Members, welcomed Chief Executive, Mr. Kieran Kehoe to his first meeting of Meath County Council.

The Chief Executive thanked the Elected Members and the management and staff of the Council for the warm welcome he had received. He outlined his priorities for the Council and for County Meath and he acknowledged the work and achievements of his predecessors, Ms. Jackie Maguire and Ms. Fiona Lawless.

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1 Confirmation of Minutes

1.1 Confirmation of minutes of Ordinary meeting held on 4th December 2023.

The minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 4th December 2023 were confirmed on the proposal of **Councillor Joe Fox** and seconded by **Councillor Paul McCabe**.

2 Matters arising from the Minutes

Councillors Gillian Toole; Nick Killian; Noel French; Joe Bonner; Maria Murphy; Helen Meyer; Trevor Golden; Conor Tormey and Michael Gallagher raised the following matters:

- Flight paths from Dublin Airport and submissions made to An Bord Pleanála;
- Water outages in the Ashbourne and Ratoath Municipal Districts;
- Road Safety at Rathbeggan National School;
- Planning matters from the December Council meeting.

Responses to queries raised were provided by Mr. Dara McGowan and Mr. Nicholas Whyatt. Mr. McGowan agreed to share the Council's planning submission to Fingal County Council with the Elected Members once the planning process was complete.

3 Expressions of Sympathy and Congratulations

Expressions of sympathy were extended to:

Paul Cregan, Transportation-Operations on the death of his mother, Mary Cregan.

Lara Fagan, Transportation Active-Travel on the death of her mother, Shena Fagan.

Áine Carter, Motor Tax on the death of her mother, Máire Cartúir.

Paula McDonnell, Environment on the death of her brother, David McDonnell.

The family of the late Bernadette Noon, Life President of the Meath Association of London.

Gráinne McCarthy, HR Management & People Dev on the death of her father, Donal O'Brien.

Senator Regina Doherty on the death of her father, Paddy Dalton.

Cllr David Gilroy on the death of his mother, Nora Gilroy.

Assumpta Hubble, Navan Library on the death of her sister, Nuala Brogan.

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The family of the late Dickie Brady, Blackcastle, Navan.

4 Disposal of Land in accordance with Statutory Notices circulated pursuant to the provisions of Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001

- 4.1 Disposal of 0.219 Ha of land at Ferganstown and Ballymacon, Co. Meath, in accordance with Section 211 of Planning & Development Act 2000 and subject to the provisions of Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001. The lands are not affected by the provisions of the Land Development Agency Act 2021.

The disposal, in accordance with the statutory notice issued on December 4, 2023, under Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001, was approved on the proposal of **An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Tommy Reilly** and seconded by **Councillor Conor Tormey**.

5 Statutory Business

5.1 Corporate Affairs and Governance

- 5.1.1 In accordance with Section 134A of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, to adopt the Meath County Council Annual Service Delivery Plan 2024.

Mr. Dara McGowan outlined the salient details of the Annual Service Delivery Plan. On the proposal of **Councillor Eugene Cassidy**, seconded by **Councillor Gerry O'Connor** and unanimously agreed, the Annual Service Delivery Plan was adopted.

- 5.1.2 To nominate and approve new member of Boyne Valley Tourism, following the resignation of Councillor Tom Behan.

As proposed by **Councillor Aisling Dempsey**, seconded by **Councillor Trevor Golden** and agreed, **Councillor Elaine McGinty** was appointed to Boyne Valley Tourism.

5.2 Planning

- 5.2.1 To approve the County Meath Heritage Strategy 2024-2030.

As proposed by **Councillor Maria Murphy**, seconded by **Councillor Sharon Tolan** and unanimously agreed, The County Meath Heritage Strategy 2024-2030 was approved.

- 5.2.2 To receive a presentation on proposed Variations No. 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Meath County

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Development Plan 2021 – 2027.

- Variation No. 1 Text Based Changes
- Variation No. 2 Mapping Corrections
- Variation No. 3 South Drogheda
- Variation No. 4 Core Strategy and Zoning

Mr. Des Foley advised the members that the proposed variations were required to increase flexibility around housing delivery and that any specific zoning matters would be dealt with at the respective Municipal District Meeting.

Mr. Alan Russell, Senior Executive Planner outlined the salient details for each of the proposed variations, including the timelines for each respective proposed variation. It was noted that proposed variations no. 3 and no. 4 would not be completed in advance of the Local Elections 2024. There were interventions and queries from **Councillors Aisling Dempsey; Elaine McGinty; Brian Fitzgerald; Gerry O'Connor** and **Sharon Tolan**. Queries raised included clarification on the guidelines; timelines for the joint local area plan between Meath County Council and Louth County Council. Responses to queries raised were provided by Mr. Des Foley and the Chief Executive.

5.3 Climate Action and Environment

5.3.1 In accordance with Section 6 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, to approve Meath County Council's Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029.

Mr. Dara McGowan outlined the timelines for the adoption of the Climate Action Plan, including details of the public consultation that had taken place. He advised that the Plan had been prepared in accordance with Department Guidelines. There were interventions from **Councillors David Gilroy; Eugene Cassidy; Ronan Moore; Michael Gallagher; Yemi Adenuga; Gerry O'Connor; Mike Bray; Gillian Toole; Elaine McGinty; Maria Murphy; Trevor Golden; Sean Drew** and **An Cathaoirleach**. The members broadly welcomed the Climate Action Plan and acknowledged that many of the actions were subject to funding. It was noted that review periods had been incorporated into the plan. On the proposal of **Councillor David Gilroy**, seconded by **Councillor Eugene Cassidy** and unanimously agreed, Meath County Council's Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029 was adopted.

5.4 Transportation

5.4.1 To enter into an agreement with Louth County Council pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act, 2001, whereby Louth County Council will exercise the statutory powers, functions and duties of Meath County Council to deliver an extension of the current Active Travel measures on the R132, further south along the R132 towards Southgate Roundabout (=600m in length) which is displayed in the Schedule to the Agreement.

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On the proposal of **Councillor Sharon Tolan** and seconded by **Councillor Trevor Golden** it was agreed to enter into an agreement with Louth County Council pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act, 2001, whereby Louth County Council will exercise the statutory powers, functions and duties of Meath County Council to deliver an extension of the current Active Travel measures on the R132, further south along the R132 towards Southgate Roundabout.

6 Reports

6.1 Chief Executive's Report

There were interventions from the following Elected Members: **Councillors Sharon Tolan; Tom Behan; Nick Killian; Aisling Dempsey; Paul McCabe; David Gilroy; Gillian Toole; Paddy Meade; Alan Lawes; Helen Meyer; Mike Bray; Joe Bonner and Maria Murphy.** Matters raised included:

Environment: Blue Flag and Green Coast applications; Flood alleviation proposals by OPW; Extension of Air Quality monitors;

Housing: Affordable Housing Schemes; Social Housing Delivery; Local Community Safety Partnerships; Part V allocations; HAP; Emergency Homeless Accommodation; Tenant-in-Situ Scheme; Estate Management Policy;

Community: Connected Hubs;

Transportation: Lighting of pedestrian crossings; Julianstown By-Pass; Feasibility Laytown Bridge; Ramps; Response during recent storm Isha;

Corporate Services: Supporting Women for Election Campaign; Out of Hours Telephone Service; Economic Development of Gaeltacht.

6.2 Report from the Corporate Policy Group

The Meetings Administrator reported that the CPG met on Friday, January 26, 2024, and reviewed the agenda for the February Council Meeting. She noted that the members of the CPG were updated on the meeting of the Economic Development Forum which took place on Thursday, January 25, 2024. It was further noted that work had commenced on a skills analysis and business profile of the County.

Ms. Daly further noted that the members of the CPG were advised of the proposed work plan for the preparation of the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029 and that the upcoming trips to New York and London were approved, with strong economic focus and promoting Meath as the place and space to thrive.

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Finally, Ms. Daly advised that the report from the Climate Action, Environment and Emergency Services SPC meeting of January 23, 2024, was noted.

6.3 Report from the Protocol Committee

The Meetings Administrator reported that the Protocol Committee met on Friday, January 26, 2024. She noted that The Local Representation Allowance and the Elected Members Portal were discussed. It was further noted that a proposal to plan a tree in memoriam of Mr. Derry Fitzgerald had been referred to the Commemoration Committee. Finally, Ms. Daly advised that the Conference and Training Schedules were approved.

An Cathaoirleach Councillor Tommy Reilly left the meeting at 4.25pm and the **Leas-Chathaoirleach, Councillor Paul McCabe** presided in his absence.

7 Correspondence

- 7.1 Correspondence from Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in response to Notice of Motion 10.5 adopted at the September 2023 meeting of the full Council.

“That Meath County Council write to Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to request that he increase the maximum grant payable for homes older than 12 months, under the Housing Adaptation Grant for people with disabilities from €30,000 to €40,000 and to increase the central funding of €83 million for Housing Adaptation Grants for people with a disability to €150 million in 2024.”

Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.2 Correspondence from Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment in response to Notice of Motion 10.6 adopted at the November 2023 meeting of the full Council.

“That Meath County Council writes to Eirgrid and Minister Eamon Ryan TD, Minister for Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport outlining our opposition to the construction of the over ground North South Interconnector.”

Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.3 Correspondence from Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in response to Notice of Motion 10.2 adopted at the October 2023 meeting of the full Council.

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Council.

“That Meath County Council write to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O’Brien TD, to request that, due to a shortage in availability of GPs, that he amends the requirements of the HMD – Form 1 so that one healthcare professional can complete the form instead of the current arrangement that requires completion by two healthcare professionals.”

Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.4 Correspondence from Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in response to Notice of Motion 10.3 adopted at the March 2023 meeting of the full Council.

“That Meath County Council writes to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, calling on them to develop a grant assistance programme to help landowners identify, and responsibly manage roadside trees that pose a threat to road users and associated infrastructure in light of the growing risk of Ash Dieback and the ever-increasing severity of winter storms.”

Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.5 LG 07/2023 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. Domestic subsistence rates for elected members of local authorities.

Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.6 Correspondence from Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. Allowances and Expenses of Elected Members.

Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.7 Circular Letter: F.01/24 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. 31 January 2024 deadline for the reporting of political donations by elected members.

Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.8 LG 02/2024 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. Annual Declarations and Public Registers.

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Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.9 Correspondence from Waterways Ireland re. Phase 2 Public Consultation on draft Shannon Navigation Bye-laws and Canal Bye-laws.

Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.10 Correspondence from Senator Victor Boyhan re. Government Legislation Programme Spring 2024.

Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

- 7.11 Circular L1/24 – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage re. Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2024-2026 – Applications for Funding.

Correspondence was noted by the Elected Members.

8 Notice of Question

8.1 Submitted by Councillor Michael Gallagher

“When granting planning permission for multiple units, does Meath County Council include a planning condition that residential units cannot be sold in bulk to investors?”

Response

In accordance with the Regulation of Commercial Institutional Investment in Housing – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2021, Meath County Council on granting planning permission for developments consisting of 5 or more houses or duplex units, apply a condition that ensures that own-door housing units and duplex units in lower density housing developments are not bulk-purchased for market rental purposes by commercial institutional investors in a manner that causes the displacement of individual purchasers.

For information, please see one of the conditions recommended in the guidelines copied below:

a)Prior to the commencement of the development as permitted, the applicant or any person with an interest in the land shall enter into an agreement with the planning authority (such agreement must specify the number and location of each housing unit), pursuant to Section 47 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, that restricts all residential units permitted to first occupation by individual purchasers i.e. those not being

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a corporate entity, and/or by those eligible for the occupation of social and/or affordable housing, including cost rental housing.

b) An agreement pursuant to Section 47 shall be applicable for the period of duration of the planning permission, except where after not less than two years from the date of completion of each housing unit, it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the planning authority that it has not been possible to transact each of the residential units for use by individual purchasers and/or to those eligible for the occupation of social and/or affordable housing, including cost rental housing.

c) The determination of the planning authority as required in (b) shall be subject to receipt by the planning and housing authority of satisfactory documentary evidence from the applicant or any person with an interest in the land regarding the sales and marketing of the specified residential units, in which case the planning authority shall confirm in writing to the developer or any person with an interest in the land, that the Section 47 agreement has been terminated and that the requirement of this planning condition has been discharged in respect of each specified housing unit.

Reason: To restrict new housing development to use by persons of a particular class or description in order to ensure an adequate choice and supply of housing, including affordable housing, in the common good.

Councillor Michael Gallagher acknowledged the response, however, he noted that vulture funds were still in a position to purchase housing developments.

8.2 Submitted by Councillor Helen Meyer

“What steps has Meath County Council taken to satisfy themselves that the DAA is not in breach of planning conditions, particularly in relation to aircraft noise, in the operation of Dublin Airport as it relates to County Meath?”

Response

Meath County Council has no jurisdiction to undertake any enforcement action as a consequence of aircraft activity associated with Dublin Airport.

Councillor Helen Meyer expressed her disappointment at the response. She noted that the quality of life of residents in South Meath were impacted by the flight paths from Dublin Airport.

8.3 Submitted by Councillor Nick Killian

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“Can the planning section please provide the number of Solar Farms granted permission in Ratoath and Ashbourne Municipal Districts to include the acreage of each Solar Farm granted and the number of commencement notices received to end of 2023?”

Response

23 applications for solar farms have been granted.

There is one application currently on appeal with the Board, for which a decision is due since December 2023.

One application is currently in the planning process (new application status).

I can confirm that no commencement notices have been lodged in relation to solar farms for the period 01.01.2023 to 31.12.2023.

Councillor Nick Killian noted that the acreage had not been included in the response. The Meetings Administrator agreed to revert to Councillor Killian with the requested information.

8.4 Submitted by Councillor Trevor Golden

“How many houses were voluntarily surrendered back to the Council over the last 10 years?”

Response

Years	House Surrendered	Succession Tenancy	Tenancy Surrendered	Total
2014	0	0	0	0
2015	14	2	5	21
2016	31	12	2	45
2017	26	6	7	39
2018	20	15	4	39
2019	35	8	2	45
2020	13	21	8	42
2021	30	31	4	65
2022	18	16	3	37
2023	14	17	10	41
2024				
Grand Total	201	128	45	374

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Noted by the Elected Members.

9 Notice of Motion

9.1 Submitted by Councillor Michael Gallagher

“To call on Meath County Council to build social and affordable homes and to supply affordable sites in rural villages in the county, where there is little or no private residential development taking place.”

Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.

The Planning Department is currently undertaking a Serviced Sites initiative study to identify potentially suitable sites adjacent to and within existing small towns/villages. In addition to this, a Settlement Capacity Audit is being undertaken to identify lands that are currently serviced and could be zoned in the future. When these studies are complete the Housing Department will review each site on a case-by-case basis to ascertain requirements for these areas as outlined in the Housing Needs Demand Assessment and the Housing Delivery Action Plan. This will inform the demand for social and affordable housing in relation to each site. We will then identify the necessary infrastructure needed and proceed and make an application to the Department for appropriate funding and resources to develop projects further.

Councillor Michael Gallagher introduced the motion and noted that there was limited housing development in a number of rural villages in the County. The motion proposed by **Councillor Michael Gallagher** and seconded by **Councillor Alan Lawes** was agreed.

9.2 Submitted by Councillor Helen Meyer

“To call on Meath County Council to conduct an independent noise assessment of aircraft noise in County Meath, related to Dublin Airport.”

Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.

Meath County Council does not intend to commence a noise assessment as requested in this Notice of Motion, as the Aircraft Noise Competent Authority has already commenced an assessment of the aircraft noise impact of the airport operating as a whole.

Councillor Helen Meyer introduced the motion. She suggested that some of the existing noise monitors located in the South Meath area were not located in the correct areas of the flight paths.

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There were interventions of support from **Councillors Michael Gallagher; Nick Killian; Gillian Toole; Gerry O'Connor and Joe Bonner**. Mr. Dara McGowan agreed to write to ANCA on behalf of the Elected Members to seek additional noise monitors in South Meath. The motion proposed by **Councillor Helen Meyer** and seconded by **Councillor Michael Gallagher** was agreed.

9.3 Submitted by Councillor Sharon Tolan

“In light of the recent long-awaited publication of the National Cycle Network by the Minister for Transport, I call on Meath County Council to seek approval and funding from TII to begin planning for the East Coast Trail to link with the Fingal Coastal Way and the Boyne Greenway Oldbridge to Navan Schemes.”

Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.

The Council notes the publication of the National Cycle Network Plan – Report 2023. For the purposes of corridor assessment, the route between Drogheda and Balbriggan was identified as Corridor 81 in the plan. Like the other corridors considered in the report, Corridor 81 has a significant width but we note that there is a preference stated for the coastline corridor due to the potential scenic value.

Given the Council’s objective to carry out the design of cycle infrastructure in accordance with the GDA Cycle Network Plan, which also contains a cycle route between Drogheda and the Fingal Boundary analogous to Corridor 81, the Council will write to the TII to request funding to begin the process of identifying and developing a preferred scheme. The Council will also seek clarification on the other corridors in the County contained in the plan and how they are classified in terms of the proposed 3 phased implementation approach that is set out.

Councillor Sharon Tolan introduced the motion. She noted Corridor 81 remains on the coastline and provides a significant amenity as well as a safe pedestrian and cycle network. **Councillor Wayne Harding** supported the motion. The motion proposed by **Councillor Sharon Tolan** and seconded by **Councillor Wayne Harding** was agreed.

9.4 Submitted by Councillor Aisling Dempsey

“That Meath County Council supply at least one salt bin and one salt fill per year to every housing estate, place of worship and public building in the county”.

Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.

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Salt bins are available to purchase through the Transportation section, two options are available; an empty salt bin or a salt bin with a single fill of salt. It is the responsibility of the applicant to secure a suitable location for the salt bin, ensure a designated person controls the use of salt and refill the salt bin as necessary. The application process captures the key element of responsibility of the applicant. The proposal can be considered by the SPC.

The motion was introduced by **Councillor Aisling Dempsey**. She noted that implementing the proposal would make a big difference to many during periods of cold weather. There were interventions of support from **Councillors Mike Bray; David Gilroy; Paddy Meade and Gillian Toole**. The motion proposed by **Councillor Aisling Dempsey** and seconded by **Councillor Mike Bray** was agreed.

An Cathaoirleach Councillor Tommy Reilly returned to the meeting at 5.00pm and presided over the remainder of the meeting.

9.5 Submitted by Councillor Trevor Golden

“We call on Meath County Council to examine the feasibility of introducing Free Parking for Meath residents, who qualify for the Free Travel Scheme.”

Supporting Information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered.

The primary objective of parking charges is to create turnover of spaces in town centre for customers and clients of retail, business and services. The provision of free parking impedes this objective.

Meath County Council grants free parking only to disabled permits holder in specific disabled bays and in any parking bays if all specific bays are occupied, a high level feasibility study will be undertaken which considers our overall corporate objectives.

Councillor Trevor Golden introduced the motion. He noted that parking charges were having a financial impact on some members of the community. The motion proposed by **Councillor Trevor Golden** and seconded by **Councillor David Gilroy** was agreed.

10 General Interest Motions

10.1 Submitted by Councillor Edward Fennessy

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"That this Council endorses the recent Amnesty International report entitled 'Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians: A Cruel System of Domination and a Crime against Humanity' and calls on the Irish government to implement the recommendations set out in the report without delay."

Councillor Edward Fennessy introduced the motion. He stated that Israeli authorities enacted multiple measures to deliberately deny Palestinians their basic rights and freedoms. He noted that these systems were maintained by Israel and they had been described by Amnesty International as a crime against humanity. The motion proposed by **Councillor Edward Fennessy** and seconded by **Councillor Alan Lawes** was agreed.

10.2 Submitted by Councillor Edward Fennessy

"To call on the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to introduce measures to remove the practice of assessing Carer's Allowance in the calculation of differential rent."

Councillor Edward Fennessy introduced the motion. He noted that the inclusion of Carer's Allowance in the calculation of differential rent was causing a significant financial burden on some tenants. The motion proposed by **Councillor Edward Fennessy** and seconded by **Councillor Michael Gallagher** was agreed.

11 Schedule of Chief Executive & Approved Orders (For Information Only)

11.1 Schedule of Chief Executive's Orders – Transportation

Noted by the Elected Members.

11.2 Schedule of Chief Executive's Orders – Environment

Noted by the Elected Members.

11.3 Schedule of Chief Executive's Orders – Housing

Noted by the Elected Members.

11.4 Schedule of Chief Executive's Orders – Community & Enterprise

Noted by the Elected Members.

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12 Any Other Business

There were interventions from **Councillors Gillian Toole; Nick Killian and Michael Gallagher**. Matters raised included correspondence at Item 7.1 of the agenda as well as the ongoing difficulties associated with the strike action by staff in the HSE and Fórsa Trade Union's direction to its members not to engage with political forums and/or processes.

The meeting concluded at 5.25pm