

**Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Kildare County Council
held at 2.00p.m on Monday, 19 October 2015
at Áras Chill Dara, Devoy Park, Naas, Co Kildare**

Members Present: Councillor B Weld (Mayor), Councillors A Breslin, A Breen, F Brett, K Byrne, B Caldwell, D Callaghan, R Cronin, W Crowley, I Cussen, M Dalton, S Doyle, T Durkan, B Hillis, I Keatley, P McEvoy, J Lawless, J McGinley, F McLoughlin-Healy, M Lynch, M Miley Jnr, S Moore, T Murray, J Neville, N O'Cearuil, F O'Loughlin, F O'Rourke, S O'Neill, J Pender, R Power, S Power, T Redmond, D Scully, M Stafford, M Wall, P Ward and B Young

Apologies: Councillors D Fitzpatrick, P Kennedy and A Larkin

Also Present: Mr P Carey, Chief Executive, Messrs E O'Sullivan, T McDonnell, P Minnock. N Morrissey (Directors of Services), Ms E Hanlon (Head of Finance), Mr L Dunne (Senior Executive Officer), Ms A. Aspell (Meetings Administrator) and other officials.

01/1015

Votes of Sympathy

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting and called for a few moments reflection.

As a mark of respect to the victims of the Carrickmines tragedy and the late Garda Anthony Golden, the mayor asked for a minute's silence.

The Mayor and members expressed sympathy to the following:

The family of the late Garda Anthony Golden

The victims of the tragedy on Glenamuck Road, Carrickmines

The family of the late Mr James (Jim) Murphy, General Operative, Kildare Newbridge Municipal District and father of Marie Murphy, Finance Department

The family of the late Mrs Marcella Whelan, mother of Sarah McHugh, Environment Section and Paddy Whelan, Maurice Whelan, Aidan Whelan and John Whelan, Water Services, Anthony Whelan and Tom Whelan, Machinery Yard and grandmother of Derek Whelan, Water Services.

The family of the late Mrs Philomena Whyte, wife of Martin Whyte, Housing Maintenance.

The family of Mr John Russell, father of Lucina Russell, Arts Officer

02/1015

Adoption of minutes

The council considered the minutes of the monthly meeting of 21 September 2015, and special meeting of 16 September 2015 together with the progress report.

Councillor Cussen requested that the draft minutes of the monthly meeting of 21 September 2015, page 2, under Matters Arising, which read “Councillor Cussen asked for clarification that the LPT allocation would not be used to purchase a chain of office for any municipal district”, be amended to record the following: “Councillor Cussen wished to clarify that it was not permitted to purchase a chain of office using Local Property Tax money”.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Wall, seconded by Councillor Breen, that the minutes of the monthly meeting of 21 September 2015 subject to the amendment stated above, and special meeting of 16 September 2015 be adopted and the progress report noted.

03/1015

Management Report

The members considered the monthly Management Report. Mr McDonnell, Director of Services, informed the members of correspondence from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government which was received after the Management Report had issued. The statement of the Minister announced the selection of the lands at Craddockstown, Naas in Bundle 1 of Selection of Sites for Social Housing PPP.

Resolved that the monthly management report be noted.

04/1015

To approve continued overdraft for the year ended 31 December 2016

The Head of Finance gave a brief overview and requested the members' approval to the overdraft of €4.5 million for the year ended 31 December 2016.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor McGinley, seconded by Councillor Moore, that approval be given to the overdraft accommodation.

05/1015

Briefing on the Kildare Integration Strategy

Councillor Kevin Byrne, Chair of the Local Community and Cultural Strategic Policy Committee, introduced Zoryana Pshyk who is Chairperson of the Kildare Integration Network and said that Zoryana would like to describe her journey from the Ukraine to Kildare. Zoryana said that everybody is a potential refugee. She came to Ireland in 2006 as an asylum seeker and spent six years in direct provision in Newbridge. In 2012 she was allowed to stay but her years in direct provision are years that she wished to forget. While there was safety, shelter and food, Zoryana

described this as being a very difficult period of her life. She said that she hoped that the implementation of the strategy would create in Kildare a more equal, more diverse and more welcoming county.

The Mayor, on behalf of the members, thanked Zoryana for an inspirational speech.

06/1015

Briefing from the Health and Safety Officer

The Chief Executive stated that this was National Health and Safety week and that Michael Hurley, Health and Safety Officer, would outline the legislative provisions as they affect Kildare County Council. He encouraged the members to attend the events that are planned to for this week to highlight health and safety.

Mr Hurley gave an overview of statistics, the legal requirements, and the effect of non-compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and the General Application Regulations 2013. He outlined the approach developed in Kildare which focused on creating a positive safety culture that is embedded within the organisation through a strategic approach. Mr Hurley stated that sensible risk management is about protecting workers and the public. It should balance benefits and risks, thus reducing risks that have serious consequences and those that are recurring. Those who create risks must manage them responsibly and, while people have a right to protection, they also have a duty to take responsibility for themselves and others.

The Mayor and members thanked Mr Hurley for the presentation. A lengthy discussion followed with the following issues being raised:

- The cost to the organisation of health and safety.
- Has the implementation of the requirements been excessive.
- Sharing best practice policy with other local authorities.
- Possibility of having a fire drill while a meeting is in progress.
- Comparisons between public and private sector contractors.
- System in place for staff to work at night.

Mr Hurley said that it is difficult to determine the costs associated with health and safety as work at sector level only began in earnest in 2005. He said that the legislation must be complied with and while there is information sharing between authorities, this is after legal proceedings have taken place. A fire drill will be arranged for the members. There are no statistics on comparisons between public and private sector and there are discussions underway with staff regarding response to be agreed for night time working.

The Chief Executive welcomed the response from the members. He said that he shared the members' frustration, but cautioned that he has a duty to comply with the legislation. Criminal negligence is a very serious charge and the burden of proof is on the accused. Local Authorities operate in the most complex work environment and he stated that he was satisfied that we are improving on an ongoing basis.

07/1015

Mayor's Business

The Mayor conveyed apologies from Councillors P Kennedy and A Larkin.

The Mayor informed the members that he attended the launch of the 1916 celebrations with the Chief Executive, Councillor O'Loughlin and Marian Higgins.

The Mayor attended the official opening of the Kerry Group in Naas.

The Mayor welcomed the announcement regarding the Sallins by-pass and interchange.

The Mayor asked the members to respond to the survey from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government regarding the Municipal Districts, when circulated by the meetings administrator.

The Mayor informed the members that a workshop regarding the Local Economic and Community Plan will take place in Solas Bhride in Kildare town on Thursday, 5 November 2015 at 9.30am.

The Mayor proposed to hold a meeting following that workshop to consider the Development Contribution Scheme. The members agreed to this arrangement and the Mayor advised members to submit their submissions to Ms K Keane in the Planning Department.

08/1015

Correspondence

The Meetings Administrator referred to correspondence circulated to the members from the Association of Irish Local Government recommending that Clause 5 of Standing Policy Council Chapter, page 3 be amended.

The members noted the proposed amendment.

09/1015

Conferences and Training

The Meetings Administrator referred to report dated 15 October 2015 circulated to the members in accordance with Section 142(5) of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by Section 53(2) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and sought approval for members' attendance at conferences and training.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Weld seconded by Councillor Keatley, with all the members in agreement, attendance of the following was approved retrospectively:

Councillors S Power and S Moore at the AILG Autumn Seminar in Inchydoney, Clonakilty, Co Cork on 1st and 2nd October 2015

Councillor T Redmond at Module 5 of the Roads, Transportation and Urban Traffic Planning seminar in the Bridge House, Tullamore on 6th October 2015.

10/1015

Resources to provide Emergency Accommodation

The following motion in the name of Councillor Young was considered:

In the light of the current lack of resources to provide emergency accommodation, including for families with very young children, that the council resolves to draw on its financial reserve funds to ensure that money is available to provide emergency accommodation in the county.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Pender.

A report stating that funding for homeless services is provided from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and through a provision in the Council's own budget was noted by Councillor Young. The written request to the Department identifying the fact that additional funding was required was also noted.

However, Councilor Young stated that this issue is quite immediate and pertinent. He cited the case of a young mother with a 12 week old baby and a toddler sleeping on the sofa and floor in the house of a relative, his experience of accompanying families to the Private Rented Tenancy Board, landlords having to sell properties and the ensuing devastation for those families threatened with eviction. Councillor Young called on the Minister to release funds so that people will not die in Kildare as has been the situation in Dublin and that no family or person will have to sleep in cars. Councillor Young asked the Chair of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee to call an emergency meeting to discuss this issue.

Members contributed to a discussion around this motion and the problem of homelessness in the county. Incidences of individual cases were noted and the fact that, while there are statistics on the numbers presenting, there was no measure on the human impact, particularly on children. It was acknowledged that supply is a huge issue and a suggestion that the rent a room scheme be advertised more widely.

Mr McDonnell, Director of Services, responded to the motion and the subsequent contribution from the members. He stated that homelessness is regarded as an urban issue, but that a strong case has been made to the Department for additional funding. He said that he is confident that given the figures presented to the Department the budget will be increased.

Mr McDonnell explained that the local authority contributes 10% of the overall budget, but he said that the real problem is the supply. He outlined a recent initiative where three staff, from Simon, Focus and the Peter McVerry Trust have been engaged to assist those presenting to Kildare County Council as homeless in sourcing accommodation.

The Mayor asked Councillor Young to adjourn his motion to the Budget meeting. Councillor Young said that a decision in principle needed to be made today. Members requested clarification as to whether there is a reserve fund available to the council and if there is money to do as the motion requests. The Chief Executive said that there are very strict rules around borrowing and the approval of the Minister is required if the overdraft accommodation is to be used. He said that the staff are doing a fantastic job in very difficult circumstances. Supply rather than money is the real issue. If the members want to make further provision, this can be considered in the context of the 2016 Budget. Members responded that it is difficult to see that money is not an issue when emergency accommodation is not being made available to those who present as homeless.

Councillor McGinley suggested that Councillor Young amend the motion.

The following amended motion was proposed by Councillor Young and seconded by Councilor Pender:

In the light of the current lack of resources to provide emergency accommodation, including for families with very young children, that the council resolves to ensure that money is available to provide emergency accommodation in the county and authorises the officials to transfer money between budgets as appropriate.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Pender, with all the members in agreement, the amended motion was carried.

11/1015

Online Information Webpage

The following motion in the name of Councillor Lynch was considered:

That this council initiates and puts in place an online information webpage which will work with Kildare based estate agents to draw up a list of properties which are available on a week by week basis on the rental market and which are available to those in receipt of rent allowance. This council should also tie in with private landlords who could upload their properties at the same online location including those who wish to enter the rent a room scheme in their homes. In addition, the housing department should make housing information available in one easy to access and read online information centre and step by step guides as to what to do to get on the council waiting list, RAS scheme etc. and what to realistically expect. This council acknowledges that the housing department are doing their best with limited resources but to avoid duplication, repetition, free up staff resources in the long term, better inform and help the public, having this

information easily accessible in one online format would help those seeking housing information, homes and staff.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Lynch and seconded by Councillor Redmond.

A report from the Housing Department stated that there are a number of service providers already advertising properties for rental through web based programmes and it would not be feasible for the local authority to replicate or administer such a system for social housing purposes. The introduction of the Housing Assistance Payment in Kildare from 2 November 2015 will change the nature of the social housing rental market over time as tenants seek out properties in their area of choice with the benefit of the Housing Assistance Payment. The Housing Department will review the information available on the website with a view to making the information more user friendly.

Councillor Lynch noted the report. He said that people are not aware of the rent a room scheme, that all members are dealing with the same questions and while it might be a lot of work, this information should be available in a single online page. Members contributed to a discussion supporting the motion in general, but expressing concern regarding the use of resources, the fact that the private market was already providing this service, requesting a review of the Council's website.

Mr McDonnell, Director of Services said that, as the report stated, the Housing Department undertakes to review the information on the council's website relating to housing.

Resolved that the report be noted.

12/1015

Council Buildings open on Saturday

The following motion in the name of Councillor Redmond was considered:

That this council establish policy to have its public buildings open on Saturdays and that council provides members with a costing for this if required. The benefits of this would be vast for our communities.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Redmond and seconded by Councillor Cussen.

A report from the Facilities Manager and the A/County Librarian stated that the cost of opening some parts of Áras Chill Dara on Saturday's would be in the region of €80 per hour. This would include the cost of a caretaker and the use of a standard meeting room or training room. The procedure for arranging this was outlined in the report. Naas Town Hall is open for bookings on Saturdays subject to approval.

There are currently twelve libraries operating with Saturday schedules. Aside from the requirement to increase staffing to facilitate Saturday opening hours there would be additional

financial costs which would include heat, light, communications, security, cleaning and maintenance.

Councillor Redmond referred to the out of hour's homeless number and proposed opening the Housing Section on a Saturday and, in particular, that a homelessness service be available. The Mayor queried whether Councillor Redmond was speaking on the motion as submitted. The Chief Executive intervened and stated that what Councillor Redmond was now proposing was not what was stated in the motion. He would have to question the need for Saturday opening of the Housing or any other Department. He said that the staff in question were doing an excellent job and the out of hour's service was being managed separately.

Members contributed to a discussion suggesting that access to services, the key one being Housing, was desirable. A Customer Service Day, incorporating workshops with Planning and Housing workshops was proposed. The Chief Executive stated that the intent of the motion will be kept under review.

Resolved that the report be noted.

13/1015

Extension of Threshold's Tenancy Service

The following motion in the name of Councillor Cronin was considered:

That the council urgently contacts the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government to impress upon Minister Alan Kelly that Threshold's Tenancy Protection Service be extended to Kildare without delay.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Cronin and seconded by Councillor Cussen.

A report from the Housing Department stated that the Mid-Leinster Rents unit and the Community Welfare Officers already provide a tenancy support service for Kildare. These officers have the authority to increase rent supplement where appropriate in order to sustain tenancies. The Homeless Support Team work closely with the Rents Unit to obtain rent supplement increases for cases already registered with homeless services.

Councillor Cronin stated that people were frantic when in fear of losing their home and that the experience in the Dublin authorities was that the service provided by Threshold assisted in providing a positive response. She said that the Mid-Leinster rents unit mentioned in the report was an inadequate service and she called on the Minister to extend Threshold's Tenancy Protection service to Kildare. Councillor Cronin complimented the work of the team in the Housing Department and asked if members could meet the people dealing with homelessness or be given a briefing. She said that she was aware there was a queuing system for appointments with the

homeless support team and that the involvement of the Threshold Tenancy Protection service could only be of benefit.

Mr McDonnell, Director of Services, stated that the work that the Threshold team are doing in Dublin is already being done in Kildare. Five service providers were asked for expressions of interest in providing this service in Kildare and three, Simon, Focus and Peter McVerry Trust responded. Mr McDonnell said that the workers were providing a very good service and that the queuing system would be examined.

Resolved that the report be noted.

14/1015

Rescue of Abandoned Horses

The following motion in the name of Councillor Cussen was considered:

That the council negotiate with Canter, the contractor who has the contract from the council to round up abandoned horse in Kildare and who operate the pound in Nurney, to facilitate permitting more of the registered horse rescue charities to rescue horses. Currently they only permit the Irish Horse Rehoming Programme and a donkey rescue charity to rescue from them.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Cussen and seconded by Councillor Lynch.

A comprehensive report from Mr Boland, Director of Services, stated that this matter had been discussed at a recent Strategic Policy Committee meeting and that the County Veterinary Officer stated that relatively few seized animals are suitable for rehoming. This relates to a range of factors including veterinary condition, being unbroken, poor breeding lines, health and safety etc. As matters stand, dealing with rehoming charities is contractually a matter for the Council's impounding contractor. This arrangement is not untypical of those which apply in other counties. There are other considerations including the practical difficulty in dealing with a number of charities. There is no doubt that issues relating to the control and associated welfare of horses have a range of complexities. These issues are currently being reviewed at national level under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Mr Boland undertook to forward a copy of the motion together with his report for consideration at national level.

Councillor Cussen noted the report and said that it was disheartening that the horses were at the mercy of this company. She said that it appeared to her that the charities were too much trouble to deal with. 392 horses were euthanized and this is quite a profitable business. Councillor Cussen agreed to refer the motion to national level, but asked for further consideration from the Director and asked why Canter are not allowing other charities to rehome horses.

Mr Dunne, Senior Executive Officer, responded on behalf of Mr Boland. He stated that there was

a good discussion at the recent Strategic Policy Committee meeting. He undertook to have regard to the motion and the report and contact the contractor. He cautioned about the practical issues, challenges and complications referred to in the report.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Cussen, seconded by Councillor Lynch, that the report be noted and the motion and the report to be referred for consideration at national level.

15/1015

Tiered System of Rates

The following motion in the name of Councillor O'Loughlin was considered:

In light of the approaching budget meeting, that the council explore options around having a tiered system of rates, having regard to location, footfall, available services that are available to the business in question in order to help support enterprise and vacant premises.

The motion was proposed by Councillor O'Loughlin and seconded by Councillor O'Cearuil. A report from Ms Hanlon, Head of Finance, stated that the basis for setting and charging commercial rates is set down in statute and regulation. The council sets the Annual Rate on Valuation (Rate) for the year and therefore it is not possible to have a tiered charging system for rates. Any amendment to the setting of the Annual Rate on Valuation would require a change in governing legislation.

Councillor O'Loughlin thanked Ms Hanlon for the report, but did not agree with it. She said that it was possible to be creative. She cited Newbridge as being a town of two halves, stating that we have to have regard to footfall. There are discretionary powers and we should be able to insert something to allow breathing space and review the occupier clause. Other counties are looking at this issue creatively, for example Donegal County Council are giving grants directly back to the small independent retailers and all those coming within the SME sector.

A lengthy debate followed, with the importance of keeping smaller business open and acknowledging their contribution towards the county during the economic downturn being foremost for members. A call to reflect collectively to agree a different approach which would enable the survival of small business was made. The Economic Development fund of €100,000 provided for in the 2015 budget has not yet been spent. There are tried and tested solutions to assist the sector if there was the collective will to do so. It was proposed that the €100,000 should be rolled into 2016 with each Municipal District getting €20,000 to distribute at its discretion for the economic development of its district. Ms Hanlon, Head of Finance said that she will seek further clarification on the legislation. She agreed that small businesses need support and agreed to include the €100,000 in the 2016 budget for consideration by the members.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor O'Loughlin, seconded by Councillor O'Cearuil, that the report be noted and the Economic Development fund to be examined in the context of Budget 2016.

16/1015

Members and Officials Trips

The following motion in the name of Councillor McLoughlin-Healy was considered:

In an attempt to debunk the perception of cosy cartels and/or explain the overuse of the 'in committee' mechanism and other measures employed by councillors and/or officials to protect each other, that the council provide a list of all the trips which councillors or officials of the council have taken in the last 3 years either individually or together as part of their respective roles outlining the following; the time, location, purpose, overall cost and outcome of each trip.

The motion was proposed by Councillor McLoughlin-Healy and seconded by Councillor Cussen. A comprehensive report on the protocols and procedures around the holding of meetings, the attendance of councillors and officials at conferences/training and the legislative background governing travel and subsistence was outlined by Mr O'Sullivan, Director of Services. Circular Letter LG 11/2014 dated 30 May 2014 refers to Section 45(3) of the Local Government Act with regard to in committee meetings. Mr O'Sullivan was unclear what Councillor McLoughlin-Healy meant by "trips" but he referred to the public register which records details of the attendance of members at conferences/training, which is approved by full council as required by legislation and which is published quarterly on the councils' website and is available for inspection by the public. In relation to staff, all claims for essential travel and subsistence made by staff, in the carrying out of their duties, are paid in accordance with Circular Letter EL 02/2015 (and previous circulars)

Councillor McLoughlin-Healy said that she was delighted to see that 'in committee' meetings will be examined at Municipal District level. She cited an incidence of a meeting being called without all members receiving notification. She said that she would like to see more transparency around expenses. She said that there is a difference in the way that some councillors are treated by officials. Councillor McLoughlin-Healy said that she was well aware of the public register. By trips she was referring in particular to trips abroad by councillors or officials. She said this information is not readily available on the website at the moment.

A debate followed with some members expressing their grave concern at the insinuations to fellow councillors and staff and urging Councillor McLoughlin-Healy to withdraw the motion. Other members stated that the Local Traveller Consultative Committee and the Strategic Policy Committees should be public meetings. As Chairman of the Finance Committee, Councillor Moore said that there had been no complaints, all expenses and payments were audited by the Internal Auditor, the Local Government Auditor and overseen by the Audit Committee and he felt

that the motion was dishonorable and urged Councillor McLoughlin-Healy to withdraw it. Councillor McLoughlin-Healy was accused of electioneering and self-promotion and reminded of the code of conduct for members which sets out the principles of courtesy and respect. Staff are part of a disciplined organisation, while the members make representations and seek to change policy. Ultimately the Chief Executive is responsible for staff. The Mayor stated that the expenses associated with the annual Mayor's trip to New York was recorded and he stressed the importance of this visit to the Kildare Association in New York. The Mayor asked the Chief Executive to speak on the motion.

The Chief Executive said that it was regrettable that this motion was tabled. In his opinion, it should have been disallowed under standing orders. Matters relating to members are already in the public domain and matters relating to staff are an executive function. He said that he wished to seriously rebut any question around the integrity of officials. He told the members that 'in committee' was provided for in legislation, as Mr O'Sullivan outlined in his report. The Chief Executive assured every member of staff that they had his full support.

The Mayor said that he has asked for respect among members. He said that he had no idea where this cosy cartel perception came from and he urged Councillor McLoughlin-Healy to put her complaint in writing to the Protocol Committee. Councillor McLoughlin-Healy confirmed that she would be lodging an official complaint.

The motion was put to the members.

Resolved with 1 member voting in favour, 28 members voting against and 5 members abstaining the motion was defeated.

17/1015

Compliance with Building Regulations

The following motion in the name of Councillor Brett was considered:

That the council investigate apartment blocks built between 2003 and 2010 in the county to verify compliance with the building regulations.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Brett and seconded by Councillor Hillis.

A report from the Planning Department stated that the role of the Building Control Authority was set out in the guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment shortly after the adoption of the Building Control Act 1990. The level of inspection indicated in the guidelines has been exceeded in Kildare. The report further stated that it would not be feasible for the council to undertake this type of inspection programme given financial and personnel resources and it should also be noted that the council does not have a statutory duty to do so.

Mr Morrissey, Director of Services, stated in his report that the Fire Service carries out an annual schedule of inspections based on risk. High risk buildings include residential institutional buildings (e.g. nursing homes and care homes) and places of public assembly (nightclubs, hotels, bars). These buildings are classified as high risk as they contain large numbers of people that are unfamiliar with the building, in the case of public assembly buildings, or they have a sleeping risk with assisted evacuation requirements in the case of nursing homes and care homes. If the Fire Service were to inspect all the apartment buildings that were constructed between 2003 and 2010, this would divert all resources away from these higher risk buildings. Fire service inspections of apartment blocks are constrained to the inspection of common areas of the building and do not include inspections of the residential areas as these areas do not fall within the powers of the Fire Service under the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003. There are no powers of inspection within private residential units. The responsibility for fire safety is the responsibility of the owners and occupiers of buildings and it is they who should ensure that their buildings are compliant. The Fire Service can inspect where there are concerns or where deficiencies are noted.

Councillor Brett cited the examples of Priory Hall and Longboat Quay. He said that fireproofing was not costly. The responsibility goes back to the person who built the development and it was absolutely unacceptable that fire ceilings were not put into these buildings. Councillor Brett called for the law to be strengthened in the area. It is not right that the council or other government bodies pick up any associated costs.

The members contributed to a discussion and agreed in general with the sentiment of the motion, while noting, however, that ultimately the responsibility lies with the developer. The change in the current Building Regulations was discussed and also the way in which these regulations will now be enforced. Builders, like all professionals, should require a licence to practice and if there are issues of non-compliance with Building Regulations then such a licence could be withdrawn. Councillor Brett thanked the members for their support and said that he understood that the investigation called for would be onerous. He said that we now have first class building regulations and the challenge would be to get people to build in accordance with these regulations.

Resolved that the report be noted.

18/1015

Compliance with the Companies Act

The following motion in the name of Councillor Stafford was considered:

That the council take all appropriate measures to ensure that all companies which are either controlled, jointly controlled by and/or associated with the council comply with the provisions of the Companies Act 2014 and, if necessary, that the companies convert to the most suitable type and

that the standard constitutions be adjusted to meet requirements.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Stafford and seconded by Councillor Durkan.

A report from Ms Hanlon, Head of Finance, stated that a list of companies controlled, jointly controlled and associated with Kildare County Council is included on Appendix 8 of the Annual Financial Statement for 2014. A letter will issue to each of these companies requesting them to comply with the provisions of the Companies Act 2014.

Councillor Stafford stated that this is a large piece of legislation which repeals and reforms all previous legislation with regard to the constitution of companies. He stated that there is an 18 month run in period and that 4 to 5 months have now elapsed. The members supported the motion. Ms Hanlon stated that she will be arranging training for members and staff on this legislation.

Resolved that the report be noted.

19/1015

Equality Budgeting

The following motion in the name of Councillor Pender was considered:

That the council incorporates equality budgeting into the budget process to inform and improve decision making and socio-economic outcomes of the budgetary process and calls on the Government to give a commitment to implement changes to Ireland's budgetary process with specific regard to equality budgeting.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Pender and seconded by Councillor Young.

A report from Ms Hanlon, Head of Finance stated that Equality Budgeting is an approach to economic policy making and planning that places equality at the centre of decisions concerning public expenditure and income. A study carried out by TASC (Think tank for Action on Social Change) revealed that the most at-risk group of poverty in Ireland were lone parents. Low income workers, women (especially women with children) and people with disabilities also tend to suffer disproportionately in any budget adjustments. Kildare County Council at all times tries to protect expenditure in areas that have a direct impact on these groups (so, for example, in 2015, funding for DPG's/ERG's was increased by €250,000) and is always cognisant of the impact of budget decisions on the most vulnerable in our society. Equality Budgeting would have a far more significant effect on Irish society if the national budgets were framed within this context; however at a local level it would be helpful if each of the Strategic Policy Committees were to look at their areas and to equality-proof existing and future policy measures with particular reference to the nine grounds of the Equal Status Acts and socio-economic status. This would automatically feed into the budget process and provide the practical information that would assist Kildare County

Council to reduce inequalities at a local level.

Councillor Pender welcomed the report. She asked the members of the Strategic Policy Committees to look at the fundamental principle of equality proofing their policies. Councillor Pender referred to the recent budget as an example of such inequity and urged the members to support her motion and write to Minister Frances Fitzgerald.

The members contributed to a discussion regarding the issue of equality budgeting. Reference was made to a recent presentation from Kildare Children and Young People's Services Committee, where members were informed that Kildare is faring out badly in terms of provision of funding and services for young people. Members of the Municipal Districts were encouraged to look at the concrete measures of providing services when distributing their funds.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Pender, seconded by Councillor Young, with all members in agreement, the motion was carried.

20/1015

Merger of Cork City and County Councils

The following motion in the name of Councillor S Power was considered:

That the council supports Cork City Council in its actions against the proposed merger of Cork City and County Councils and further supports its challenge to the Local Government Reform Programme which undermines the principle of subsidiarity.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Power and seconded by Councillor Caldwell. Councillor Power said that there are currently 31 local authorities and that this will reduce to 29 if the merger of Cork and Galway go ahead. The Putting People First document should be considered in the context of this proposed merger. Councillor Power stated that the Minister gave Cork 5 years but has now decided that both councils should merge rather than extend the boundary. There are currently 86 members on Cork City and County Council and the proposal is that this would reduce to 30 members. Councillor Power asked the members to support this motion and in doing this they would be supporting their colleagues in Cork.

As it was 6.00pm, on the proposal of the Mayor, Councillor Weld, seconded by Councillor Scully, standing orders were suspended for 10 minutes to allow the meeting to conclude.

The members contributed to a discussion with general agreement for the motion noting that the different needs of urban and rural communities would be difficult to reflect in the proposed merger.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Power, seconded by Councillor Caldwell, with all the

members in agreement, the motion was carried.

The meeting concluded.
