

Minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 3.00 p.m. on Monday, November 7th 2016

Attendance:

Mayor: Cllr. J. Dolan

Members: Cllrs. T. Farrell, P. Hogan, F. Keena, A. McManus, M. O'Brien and A. O'Rourke

Officers: Barry Kehoe, Director of Services
Pat Keating, District Manager
Pat Nally, District Engineer
Anne McNamara, Assistant Staff Officer

Votes of Congratulations:

All the Members wished to be associated with the following votes of congratulations:
For those involved in the ceremonies regarding Jadotville, Garrycastle GAA Club on its 35th anniversary, Dermot Ryan on the launch of his book on the history of Garrycastle; The sporting achievements of Robbie Henshaw (Rugby), Martin Ward, Shane Lawless and Jordon McCarthy (World Kick boxing) and for Rosemount's success in "Pride of Place" competition.
The Mayor was complimented on his representation for Athlone in Collins Barracks

Votes of Sympathy:

All the Members wished to be associated with expression of sympathy to Mick McCallon on the death of his wife Olive.

Minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,
Seconded by Cllr. McManus and resolved,
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the October Monthly Meeting which was held on the 3rd October 2016"

Matters Arising:

The Director advised the Members of the monies allocated to Moate, Ballymore and Streamstown under the Village Renewal Scheme; that he would have an update on the shop in Castledaly at a future meeting and that the Moate Bye Laws have been advertised.

Consideration of the Chief Executive's Report and General Municipal Allocation (GMA):

Jimmy Dalton, Head of Finance went through the Report, the third year of GMA. He highlighted some sections and advised that the procedural changes had taken place and will continue in 2017. He circulated the calculation of the General Municipal Allocation and the basis for its apportionment. The Members welcomed the Report and the fact that funding had been maintained though this meant less buying power. They felt it was fair but some community grants were too small and of little benefit to groups. They felt there should only be a single tranche of applications and this would allow bigger amounts. Also Pride of Place might be considered for assistance. They requested that a report be circulated mid-year on the spending of the budgets.

Flood Preparation Plans for winter 2016 /2017:

The Director advised the Members that an additional Engineer has been allocated to flood defence this winter and outlined the various measures being taken in preparedness in the event of flooding. Meetings have been called with the Defence Forces and the Flood Response Unit and one will be arranged with the voluntary sector. There will be a public information evening on November 21st at 6.30pm in the Civic Centre. The Members welcomed the report and asked that the media have a single contact person in the event of flooding but the Director said that there would be daily press releases as there was last winter.

Community Grants 2016 for Tidy Towns:

The Director advised that there were no applications received for the second tranche of grants. The Members felt there should only be one tranche and grant amounts could then be bigger than the ones given this year. The Director said this could be considered by the SPC.

Community Grants 2016 for Residents Associations:

The list was circulated and the Members again felt that the amounts were too small.

However it was proposed by Cllr. Keena,

Seconded by Cllr. Farrell and resolved,

“We hereby approve of the Community Grants 2016 for Residents Associations as circulated”

Community Grants 2016 for Community Action Schemes:

The list of grants was circulated.

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

“We hereby approve of the Community Grants 2016 for Community Action Schemes as circulated”

Community Grants 2016 for Christmas Lights – upgrade:

This fund was created to assist communities in upgrading their stock to more energy efficient and robust LED lights. The list of grants for 50% of costs was circulated.

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell,

Seconded by Cllr. Keena and resolved,

“We hereby approve of the Community Grants 2016 for Christmas Lights upgrade as circulated”

Turning on Christmas Lights:

It was agreed to switch on the Christmas Lights for the town at the Castle on Wednesday 23rd November at 5.30pm.

Report on the Acquisition of Lands for the Railway Field Road:

The Director said he was disappointed to advise the Members that there was still no response from C.I.E. Minister Ross had listened carefully to the Deputation on October 19th and said he would appoint a mediator to ensure whatever scheme is put forward, will be the best for the benefit of the Town, but to date, no one had been appointed. The Members thanked the Minister for meeting them but asked that a letter be sent to the Minister for an update. They also agreed that the Railway Field Road be an item on every Agenda from now on, until agreement is reached with C.I.E.

Recommendations from Parking Sub-Committee:

The District Manager circulated the recommendations made by the Parking Sub-Committee and the Members agreed with them.

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,

Seconded by Cllr. Farrell and resolved,

“We hereby approve of the commencement of the public consultation process on making changes to the Street Parking Bye Laws as follows:

1. Parnell Square, Lyster Street, Chapel Street and Excise Street – Change from all day parking (Zone B) to a 2 hour parking regime (Zone A);
2. Magazine Road – Introduce 2 hour paid parking (Zone A) on this street; and
3. Dublin Road – extend paid parking as all day parking (Zone B) to Bunnavally

Questions:

1. **Cllr. T. Farrell:**

When will the sanctioned footpath repairs in Tang be carried out?

Reply: These works are scheduled to commence in December 2016.

2. **Cllr. T. Farrell:**

When will the footpaths at Drumraney Church be upgraded?

Reply: These works are scheduled to commence this month.

3. **Cllr. T. Farrell:**

Following the upgrade at Tubberclaire Cross, could this area be enhanced further to support the Tidy Villages project?

Reply: The District Engineer will assist the Tidy Towns committee, where possible, with any proposal they have to enhance the area identified.

4. **Cllr. J. Dolan:**

Has Athlone Municipal District received an update from the HSE in relation to the progress of works at St. Vincent's Hospital Athlone?

Reply: No update has been received.

5. **Cllr. J. Dolan:**

When are the electronic speed signs going to be erected on the N62 approaching Ballinahown?

Reply: The contract for the supply of the signs has been placed and it is envisaged that they will be in place within the next month.

6. **Cllr. J. Dolan:**

When are the turning lanes for Castledaly on the old Dublin Road going to be repainted?

Reply: These will be done in tandem with the resurfacing of the road which is in the current 3 Year Roads Programme.

7. **Cllr. F. Keena:**

What progress has been made in planning the erection of the Cumann Na mBan name plate on the Athlone Relief Road Bridge in conjunction with Roscommon County Council?

Reply: It is intended that this sign will be erected on the first occasion when there are suitable traffic management measures in place for other road maintenance, improvement or safety works.

Supp. Q. Will this be done in conjunction with Roscommon County Council.

Reply: Yes it can be.

8. **Cllr. F. Keena:**

Following my previous request can this Municipal District give an update on progress made to request the owners of the vacant barges moored near the Railway Bridge to enhance them?

Reply: The Waterways Ireland Inspectorate is currently in correspondence with the owners to have these barges moved.

Supp. Q. Could they just be painted to brighten the area?

Reply: We will contact WI again.

9. Cllr. F. Keena:

Can this Municipal District provide an update on my motion to provide a pelican pedestrian crossing / raised platform on the Coosan Point road at the eastern end of Assumption Road in the interest of public safety?

Reply: The District Engineer is yet to carry out the survey to identify the most appropriate measures at this location. In any event, as stated in response to the motion, the carrying out of any works will have to be considered in the context of the 2017 Roads programme.

10. Cllr. P. Hogan:

What areas does the Loughanaskin Local Area Action Plan include?

Reply: A map, showing the area covered by this Plan is attached.

11. Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

When will the Clonbrusk water rehabilitation scheme commence and be completed?

Reply: Work on the replacement of the watermain at Clonbrusk has started with the completion of the Site Investigation in mid-October 2016. The main contract for the replacement of the watermain will be tendered by Irish Water on receipt of the Site Investigation report (in mid-Nov2016) and it is expected that a contractor will commence work on the new main in January 2017.

12. Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

Fire hydrants are not being flushed every 3 months like they were when the Council was in charge of water services. Have the Council made a case to Irish Water to have this work carried out on a regular basis?

Reply: Further to the completion of the Watermains Rehabilitation Scheme in Athlone in 2014, large areas of the water supply network are now supplied via new watermains and the flushing frequency for these sections has consequently reduced. Other sections of older watermain network have benefited from an increase in flushing frequency as a result and the totality of the water supply network is being kept under constant review in this regard.

13. Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

When will the bus stop at Valley Court be repaired with suitable sheeting to give shelter to those waiting?

Reply: The District Engineer is currently awaiting prices from the Council's glazing contractor and the broken glass will be replaced with sheeting, the extent of which will be dependent on the funding being available.

Correspondence:

The District Manager informed the Members that the following correspondence had been received:

Resolution from M.D. of Tralee: That Government ring-fence €75m in the Budget for the Post Office network in the country.

Acknowledgement from TII re the maintenance programme for the M6; maintenance of drainage elements is carried out every 26 weeks and daily inspections take place for any defects.

Paul Veale, IDA. He will attend December meeting.

Motions:a) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this Municipal District support communities in towns and rural areas in their applications for CCTV grants under the Rural Development Fund”

Response: The Council is not aware of any current CCTV grant scheme under the Rural Development Fund but can consider any future opportunities and provide support where feasible.

The Director advised that CCTV really needs to be monitored by Gardai and communities are not in a position to have their own schemes. Cllr. Farrell asked that we write to the Minister for Justice to expand existing schemes then. It was agreed to follow up on previous letter.

b) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this District re-lines the crossroads at Ballykilduff Bridge and Dunlum Cross in the interest of traffic safety”

Response: The District Engineer will arrange for the appropriate lines at these junctions in tandem with other works locally.

c) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“Under the Village Renewal Scheme could this Municipal District consider re-instating the footpath at the corner of Ballymore Village to McCormack’s Pub”

Response: These works are not planned within the context of the Village Renewal Scheme. They can be considered in the context of the 2017 Roads Programme.

d) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District writes to the Minister for the O.P.W. requesting that a grant scheme for the provision of the flood defences for rural properties be introduced immediately”

Response: The provision of such a scheme was included in the Council’s submission to the Shannon CFRAMS Study and a further letter to the Minister can issue, if the Members so decide.

It was agreed to write to the Minister.

e) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District either CPO or inspects the block containing 9 and 10 St. Mary’s Place under the Dangerous Structures Act and report urgently on their condition”

Response: The Council has served Dangerous Structures Notices under the Sanitary Services Act on Numbers 8, 9, 10 and 11 St Mary’s Place. A response has been received recently from a Receiver appointed to No 10 and there is ongoing discussion. There was a recent fire in No. 9 and following a Garda request, this was boarded up by the Council and the situation is being kept under review. The option of Compulsory Purchase is not under consideration at the present time.

The Members expressed concern that some action be taken by the Council and that they be kept informed.

f) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District installs a speed ramp approaching the National School in Ballinahown from Clonmacnoise”

Response: A speed survey can be carried out at this location and then appropriate measures can be identified based on the results of the survey.

The following 2 motions (g and o) were taken together.

g) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

"That Athlone Municipal District explores the possibility of using REDZ funding for the provision of a Tourist Train from Moate to Athlone"

Response: The provision of a tourist link between Moate and Athlone and possibly to other destinations would be a significant addition to the visitor experience of Athlone and the surrounding areas. In constructing the Mullingar to Athlone Cycleway, new bridge decks were installed between Athlone and Moate to facilitate a rail link. However, this project is not at a stage where it would be eligible for REDZ funding. Rather, a detailed feasibility study is required to underpin an application for capital assistance and this study should also address the issue of long term sustainability. It is intended that such a study would be undertaken as soon as practicable.

o) Cllr. F. Keena:

"That this Municipal District considers developing a loop shuttle service between Athlone, Clonmacnoise, Ballinahown and Moate utilising both road and the old railway track parallel to the greenway in order to develop and promote tourism and rural links"

Response: The provision of a tourist link between Moate and Athlone and possibly to other destinations as suggested in the Motion would be a significant addition to the visitor experience of Athlone and the surrounding areas. In constructing the Mullingar to Athlone Cycleway, new bridge decks were installed between Athlone and Moate to facilitate a rail link. A detailed feasibility study is required to underpin an application for capital assistance and this study should also address the issue of long term sustainability. It is intended that such a study would be undertaken as soon as practicable.

All the Members supported these Motions but the Director said that no application could be made to REDZ yet as he would have to show a long term demand for the facility. He said they were worthwhile motions and groundwork on some of the issues involved could begin.

Suspension of Standing Orders:

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,

Seconded by Cllr. Farrell and resolved,

"We hereby suspend Standing Orders in order to deal with the remaining items on the Agenda"

h) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

"That Athlone Municipal District implements safety improvements at the motorist/pedestrian interface at the Riverpark/Main Street junction in Moate in the interest of public safety"

Response: The District Engineer will inspect this location and assess what the most appropriate measures would be for this location.

i) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

"That Athlone Municipal District includes the L54031 for works in the 2017 cul de sacs programme.

Response: This road can be considered in the context of the cul-de-sac programme, subject to it funding.

j) Cllr. A. McManus:

"That Athlone Municipal District investigates the possibility of placing an anti-slip surface on Friary Lane and an additional hand-rail"

Response: This can be reviewed and options explored in the context of the Church Street / Dublin Gate Street enhancement Project.

Cllr. McManus asked that something be done for this winter but the District Engineer advised that it will be effected by the Church Street Works and so it will be looked at in that context. As regards, a hand rail being put in place, he said these are private properties so permission would have to be got from each of the property owners.

k) Cllr. A. McManus:

“That Athlone Municipal District writes to Irish Water to enquire about the possibility of extending the Glasson Sewerage Scheme into Cornamagh, Garnafailagh and Coosan”

Response: A letter can issue if the Members so decide.

It was agreed to write to Irish Water.

l) Cllr. A. McManus:

“Can this Municipal District consider replacing the footpaths in Bloomfield Drive in the context of Budget 2017”

Response: Extensive works were carried out on footpaths in this estate in previous years. However, if there are sections of particular concern they can be considered in the context of the 2017 Roads Programme.

m) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That Athlone Municipal District acknowledge the ongoing work carried out by the Tony Parker Foundation in purchasing & providing public access defibrillators and that this District identify a location in the core of the town where their hundredth defibrillator can be located”

Response: This is acknowledged and the Municipal District will provide any assistance that is required.

It was agreed to meet with the Foundation to discuss the most suitable location for a defibrillator.

n) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That Athlone Municipal District requests WCC's Road Design team to consider alternative route options if and when they start designing the link road to Garrycastle rather than directing this new road through Brawny estate”

Response: The provision of this link road is included as an objective in the Lissywoolen South Local Area Plan and it is an important element of transportation infrastructure for this area. It is intended that it would be a low speed road, designed to service the area from Garrycastle to Brawney only and as an urban road, it will be designed in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, which will ensure that pedestrians and cyclists will be fully catered for. This road will be subject to a Part 8 Planning Process and a report on the options considered will be brought before the Members of the Municipal District, before the commencement of the process.

It was agreed to circulate the Lissywoolen LAP to the Members as it was adopted some time ago.

p) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That Athlone Municipal District writes to Mr. Joe Ruane, HSE Manager, enquiring when will work commence on St. Vincent's Long Term Residential Care Centre and whether the commitment of March 2017 for return of residents, will be honoured”

Response: A letter can issue if the Members so decide.

Cllr. Hogan said that no work has commenced at the Centre and as such we should hear from the HSE. Cllr. Keena said he had spoken to Pat Bennett, HSE and he said they had moved on site on October 17th and works are on schedule. It was however agreed to invite him and Joe Ruane to the December Meeting to update the Members on progress and to get reassurances that the residents will be back in March 2017 as promised.

q) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That Athlone Municipal District informs the Members as to the number of derelict sites in the area and what plan is in place to combat the problem”

Response: There are currently 60 Derelict sites on the Register for Athlone Municipal District. All reports of derelict sites are inspected and processed under the Derelict Sites Act 1990.

Cllr. O’Rourke said the legislation is a blunt instrument and not working but he was assured that levies are a charge on the property. Cllr. Hogan said he looks forward to the detailed Report at a future meeting.

r) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That Athlone Municipal District when purchasing property to cater specifically for people with disabilities ensures that the house is disability friendly, particularly for people who are dependent on wheelchairs”

Response: The Council, in acquiring properties for special needs, ensures that the property is suitable in all respects for the needs required to be met, or can be made suitable, at reasonable cost.

Cllr. Hogan disagreed with the response as he knows of one tenant who is wheelchair bound and is in a house totally unsuitable for his needs. Despite continual requests to have adaptations made, nothing has been done. The Director undertook to look into this case.

s) Cllr. A. O’Rourke:

“In light of the extremely high vacancy levels in both commercial and residential properties on Connaught Street and Pearse Street, that Westmeath County Council would immediately engage with all stake holders to examine options regarding regeneration and incentives to assist in rebuilding and reusing these once vibrant commercial streets”

Response: The Municipal District staff would be available to assist in this initiative. The Business Incentive Scheme is available to the occupiers of vacant properties and the Council is open to proposals that might further assist in the regeneration of all areas of the town.

In a lengthy discussion that followed all the Members agreed that action was needed to assist traders/property owners in this area of town. They agreed that there is no easy answer but to hold a meeting, to listen to those involved and to examine possible actions, is the only way forward. The Director agreed to hold this meeting and to have a Senior Planner and the Local Enterprise Officer present.

t) Cllr. A. O’Rourke:

“For this Municipal District to make a strong case to Irish Water to have the houses along the Ballymahon Road connected to the new water main without further delay”

Response: An application for funding to carry out this work was made to Irish Water in July and this is currently being processed by Irish Water.

It was agreed to write to Irish Water.

u) Cllr. A. O’Rourke:

“For this Municipal District to give consideration to the idea of a bridge over the Ballymahon Road rather than a pedestrian crossing where the new cycleway crosses this very busy commuter artery in and out of Athlone”

Response: This has been considered but has been ruled out in the short to medium term due to cost and aesthetic considerations. It is intended that the traffic light controls to be

installed would be linked to the traffic signals at the Crescent to ensure that the delay to motorists would be kept to an absolute minimum. Furthermore, it is intended that the situation would be kept under review and should inordinate delays occur in the future due to the volume of cyclists on the greenway, then such a proposal can be considered.

While all the Members supported this Motion, the Director advised that a serious need would have to be established before any expenditure could be made on it and a crossing would still have to be provided at road level. The Ballymahon Road is an urban road within the core area of the town and as such, some delays have to be accepted.

A.O.B.

In response to a query, the District Engineer advised the Members that there are 155 cul de sacs in the AMD outside of the town.

He advised that one ramp has been removed from the Baylough Plan.

He circulated a list of proposals for works in Clar Areas in order of priority, together with a map. This was welcomed by the Members and considered very fair.

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

“We hereby approve of the works listed in order of priority in the Clar Areas of AMD as circulated”

It was agreed to hold an In-Committee Meeting on Wednesday 23rd November at 3.30pm to discuss Capital Works, the European Peoples Festival and the make-up of sub committees.

It was agreed there would be no motions or questions submitted for the December meeting.

The Mayor advised the Members that he is engaging in talks with both sides involved in the Community Games and he is hopeful there might be a resolution for 2018.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MAYOR

DATE