

Minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, April 4th 2016.

Attendance:

Mayor: Cllr. T. Farrell

Members: Cllrs. J. Dolan, P. Hogan, F. Keena, A. McManus and M. O'Brien.

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

Apology: Cllr. A. O'Rourke

Votes of Congratulations:

The Mayor and all the Members welcomed Cllr. Ailish McManus to the meeting and wished her well in the future as a Councillor. The Director welcomed her on behalf of the Executive and Staff, assuring her of their help and support while working together.

The Mayor also wished all well in the Senate elections, especially Cllr. O'Rourke.

The Mayor congratulated the Reynolds Dance Academy on winning the World Dance Championship and proposed a request be sent to the CPG for a Cathaoirleach Award. This was seconded by Cllr. Dolan and all agreed.

Votes of Sympathy:

All the Members wished to be associated with Cllr. Hogan's expression of sympathy to the Grogan and Casey Families on the recent death of Ann.

Minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr. Dolan,
Seconded by Cllr. O'Brien and resolved,
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the March Monthly Meeting which was held on March 7th 2016"

Matters Arising:

In response to Cllr. Hogan's query the District Manager advised that no submissions have been received on foot of the public notice to name the Roads after the five signatories of the 1916 Proclamation who are not already commemorated in Athlone and the item will be on the May Agenda.

In response to Cllr. Keena's query the District Manager advised that the public notice inviting requests from the public to have people associated with the 1916 Rising commemorated will be in next weeks Westmeath Independent.

Report on Local Improvement Schemes, cul de sacs and the 2016 Roads Programme:

The Director advised the Members that the Local Improvement Scheme has now been finalised and Application Forms are available. There is a budget of €100,000 for the county with the local contribution being 40% and the closing date for receipt of Applications is 31/05/2016. He outlined the criteria for qualifying but said all applications will be assessed and he hopes to have a Report on allocations for the July Meeting. The Members welcomed the proposals for expenditure.

The Director also advised that there is €200,000 for cul de sacs in the County of which €62,000 will be spent in Athlone District.

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell,

Seconded by Cllr. Keena and resolved,

“We hereby approve of the Local Improvement Scheme for private roads and the additional funding for cul de sacs in the Athlone District”

The Director circulated a list for Regional & Local Road Restoration following the flood damage to the value of €2m. The damage was estimated at €3m in the Athlone Municipal District but only €3m was received for the full county. He hopes there will be an additional allocation in April and if so, he will have another list at a future Meeting.

The raising and construction of the roads in Goldenisland, Carrickobrien and Muckanagh are being dealt with separately and are not included in the €2m.

Roundabout Advertisement Scheme:

The Director informed the Members that at the last County Council Meeting, the Roundabout Advertisement Scheme was approved. The candidate roundabouts for the Athlone District are as follows:

Creggan (N62/R446)

Cornamaddy(N55/R916)

Clonbrusk (L4003/L4023 near B&Q)

Arcadia (L4003/L4005 near Coosan Tavern)

Altown (R916/L8046 near SOLAS Training Centre)

Garrycastle(R916/IDA future access near AIT rear gate)

Wash House Turn (R446/R916)

Willow Park (R446/L8045 near AIT front gate)

Bawnoges (R446/R420 near Brown's Texaco, Moate)

The Members felt the money should be ringfenced for local projects or Tidy Towns projects and that the signs should be of a high quality. The Director advised that funding is not ring fenced but income can be listed in the general municipal allocation in 2017.

It was proposed by Cllr. Dolan,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

“We hereby approve of the Roundabout Sponsorship Scheme and the Roundabouts included, as outlined by the Director”

Questions:

1) Cllr. T. Farrell :

What is the result of the Safety Review of the roundabout at the Spar Shop in Garrycastle?

Reply: The final Safety Audit for the Garrycastle Bridge Scheme has been completed and no issues were identified.

2) Cllr. T. Farrell:

What is the current status of the taking in charge process of Temple View housing estate in Mount Temple?

Reply: An application to take this estate in charge has been received by the Council. Before this can be progressed, a survey will be required and the taking in charge of the water services infrastructure will require the approval of Irish Water.

3) Cllr. F. Keena:

Can this Municipal District provide a detailed update on the status of the proposal to extend the Greenway from Garrycastle to the Whitegates?

Reply: The Part 8 Planning consent for the cycleway from Garrycastle to the Marina was approved in December 2015 and it is intended that the section from Garrycastle to the White Gates would be constructed in 2016, subject to funding. The Council is continuing to engage with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in this regard.

4) Cllr. F. Keena:

Can this Municipal District provide a detailed report on the status of the planned Church Street enhancement project & associated traffic management proposals?

Reply: An application for €1.5m Street Enhancement funding for Church Street was made to the BMW Regional Assembly in October last and was approved in January 2016 with €1.5m matching funding to be provided by Westmeath County Council. Consultants are currently being procured to advise on traffic management and streetscape design and it is intended that detailed reports would be brought before the Members in September 2016.

5) Cllr. F. Keena:

When will the local tourist information signs be replaced in Ballymore as previously requested by me?

Reply: These signs are being redesigned at present and will be replaced before end of July.

6) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

What is the latest update regarding the roll out of a mobile CCTV unit to tackle illegal dumping?

Reply: Athlone Municipal District is in discussion with the CCTV contractor to organise surveillance on priority areas.

7) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

Has any progress being made in deploying an additional litter warden to Moate/Athlone to tackle dog fouling and illegal dumping?

Reply: As advised in February, there is no provision for employing an additional litter warning and the Athlone Municipal District Community Warden is empowered to act as Litter Warden for the entire District, including Moate. Blackspot areas identified in Moate are being monitored by the Community Warden.

8) Cllr. J. Dolan:

When is the Baylin to Mounttemple road going to be repaired?

Reply: Repair works commenced in late February and it is intended that the road will reopen within the next week.

9) Cllr. J. Dolan:

When are the road repairs to the flood damaged roads going to start?

Reply: These works have commenced and will be carried out in conjunction with the annual roads programme.

10) Cllr. J. Dolan:

How many are on the housing list in the Athlone Municipal District?

Reply: As of 31st March, there were 1,253 approved applicants for social housing support in the Athlone Municipal District.

Correspondence:

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

- Office of Minister for Defence – the reasons for the withdrawal of Lariam.
- Office of Minister for Finance – acknowledgement of letter re capping salaries in the Charity Sector – will be referred to Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform.

It was agreed to circulate these letters.

Cllr. Keena asked that we write again to the Minister for Defence about the Museum in Custume Barracks as no response has been received to date to our first letter.

Motions:

a) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this Municipal District carries out a Safety Review of Mount Carmel Drive in Moate, including traffic management, parking, footpaths and the green area”

Response: A Safety Review can be carried out by the District Engineer if the Members so decide.

It was agreed that a Review should be carried out, but caution advised not to stop residents parking outside their homes.

b) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this Municipal District commences the process to take in charge, Meadow Lane housing estate”

Response: Westmeath County Council carried out surfacing works in Meadow Lane in 2015 and the Council has taken responsibility for the public lighting within the estate. The formal taking in charge of the estate cannot be progressed until the water services infrastructure has been approved by Irish Water, through agreed protocols.

c) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this Municipal District carries out an assessment of all the trees in the public areas in Ballymore Village”

Response: The Council has responsibility for all trees in public areas, such as those referenced in the Motion. A costing for such a review can be prepared by the District Engineer if the Members so decide and it should be noted that a specific budget will be required as the review will involve more than 120 trees. If there are any particular trees that are of concern to the Members, these can be assessed immediately.

It was agreed that a review be carried out.

d) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That this Municipal District liaises with Transport Infrastructure Ireland to provide better sightlines at the junction of the Annagh Road L5457 with the N55 in the interest of public safety”

Response: The Council is currently developing proposals for improvement works at this road junction. A feasibility study relating to the proposed scheme and application for

funding have been submitted to TII for consideration. It is anticipated that the necessary works will proceed subject to scheme approval and funding from TII and agreement in relation to necessary land acquisition.

e) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That this Municipal District makes available to the Brawny Residents Association a strip of land at the east side of Brawny Square for distribution to the local residents for allotments.

Response: This will be considered by the Property Management Section in the context of the Council’s long term plans for these lands and a response will issue to the Resident’s Association as soon as possible

All the Members supported this Motion.

f) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That this Municipal District discusses the need to apply to the Department to include Athlone as a Rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ) in partnership with the neighbouring Local Authority sections of Roscommon, Longford & Offaly”

Response: The Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) recommended the establishment of Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) to drive rural development. Subsequently, the country was divided into 149 such zones and Athlone is the centre of a zone that includes parts of Westmeath, Roscommon and Offaly. A map showing all of the REDZ will be circulated for the information of the Members.

The Members requested that they be given a presentation about REDZ at a future meeting, to enable further understanding of it and it was agreed this would be arranged.

g) Cllr. M. O’Brien:

“In light of a recent car crash in Castledaly village, I call on Athlone Municipal District to introduce measures to tackle the serious speeding issue in the village”

Response: A Safety Review, including a speed survey can be carried out by the District Engineer and safety measures can then be considered in this context and the 2017 Roads Programme.

It was agreed to proceed with the Review.

h) Cllr. M. O’Brien :

“That Athlone Municipal District installs ramps at the Ard Grainne housing estate in Moate”

Response: A Safety Review can be carried out by the District Engineer and the proposal to install ramps can then be considered in this context and the 2017 Roads Programme.

It was agreed to proceed with the Review.

i) Cllr. M. O’Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District review and upgrade all the brown tourism signs in the District”

Response: A review of brown tourism signs provided by Westmeath County Council in the District will be carried out in 2016 and a report on upgrading requirements will be brought before the Members prior to the consideration of the Budget for 2017.

j) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District requests a Variation to the County Development Plan to promote the development of crèches and playschools in Rural Locations”

Response: Policy regarding crèches and preschools is contained in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 (reference paragraph 7.10), which refers to the need to provide high quality, affordable childcare facilities at easily accessible central locations, in association with housing and other development in compliance with the County Childcare

Strategy and the Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001 (Duel) or any revision thereof. A recommended location in the County Development Plan for the development of childcare facilities including playschools in a rural location is in the vicinity of existing schools serving the area. Location of services close to or in conjunction with existing services and community facilities consolidates and supports exiting services, reduces the amount of travel required and can allow for sharing of existing facilities. It is considered that existing policy in the current Plan provides a framework for appropriate service provision in rural locations and it is considered that a variation to the Plan is not therefore required or recommended.

The Members felt that crèche facilities should be provided in rural areas beside existing schools. It was agreed to have a map at a future meeting showing all the existing crèches in the County and this would help see where the deficiencies exist.

k) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District immediately starts the necessary roof repairs to numbers 1 to 6 Battery Heights”

Response: The repairs to 1-6 Battery Heights are scheduled to commence in the coming weeks. Work was deferred because of the recent extremely wet weather. Discussions are ongoing with the preferred Contractor and it is expected that a commencement date will be agreed next week. Residents will be informed at the earliest opportunity.

l) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District requests that the Transport Infrastructure Ireland put forward a plan and funding to solve the problems and dangers at Knockinea Hill on the N62”

Response: In the current year, TII have allocated funding to commence construction of phase I of the N52 Coghlan to Billistown Scheme, to advance design proposals for Phase II of this scheme and to commence design of the N55 Tang to the Pigeons realignment scheme. These schemes have been identified as the highest priority in the context of the available funding. The Council will continue to emphasise the importance of the realignment of the N62 in its communication with TII.

A.O.B.

It was proposed by Cllr. T. Farrell,

Seconded by Cllr. Dolan and resolved,

“We hereby agree to hold the May Monthly Meeting in Streamstown Community Centre”

The District Manager advised the Members of the following events:

A group of visitors are arriving from Chateaubriant on Thursday evening, April 7th and they will be welcomed on Friday morning at 10.30 in the Civic Centre and a Plaque celebrating the 21st year of Twinning will be unveiled. He asked all to attend.

The European Peoples Festival will be taking place in July in Latvia this year and any Member interested in attending should let him know.

The Chamber is holding a Business Awards night in the Sheraton Hotel on Saturday April 16th 2016 and any Member interested in attending should let him know.

There will be a Parade by the Defence Forces in Athlone on May 7th and plaques will be unveiled in remembrance of the Elliott's and Sean Costello.

Cllr. Dolan raised the issue of an ongoing enforcement issue re unauthorised caravans and mobile homes and the Director advised that the due process of the law has to be followed but he will contact the Solicitor again, requesting the process be speeded up if possible.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MAYOR

DATE