

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

Attendance:

Mayor: Cllr. J. Dolan

Members: Cllrs. T. Farrell, P. Hogan, 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

Apology: Cllr. F. Keena

Votes of Sympathy:

All the Members wished to be associated with expressions of sympathy to the following:
The Kerrigan Family on the death of Joe and the Kildea Family on the death of Martina.

Votes of Congratulations:

Cllr. O'Brien congratulated Deputy Moran on securing funds for the continuation of the Cycleway from Garrycastle to the Whitegates.

Minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell,
Seconded by Cllr. McManus and resolved,
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the June Monthly Meeting and the AGM which were held on the 7th June 2016"

Matters Arising:

In response to his query, Cllr. Dolan was advised that the Executive are meeting with Fáilte Ireland in the coming week and will raise the issue of the Tourist Office.

Cllr. O'Rourke was advised that the design for the works for Baylough have just now been completed and will be brought before the Members at the next Meeting.

Draft Speed Limit Bye Laws in Housing Estates:

The Members welcomed and noted the proposed Bye Laws and asked that a list be circulated of the 15 estates it is hoped will be taken in charge this year. They were advised that the signage to be erected is statutory signage and therefore cannot be erected by Residents Associations themselves, but the Bye Laws can be amended to include estates as they are taken in charge.

Traffic calming ramps in Church Hills Crescent & Kilmacuagh Avenue:

The Members welcomed the proposals for traffic calming measures in both areas.

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,
Seconded by Cllr. McManus and resolved,
"That we hereby approve of the installation of ramps at the locations shown on the circulated maps in Church Hills Crescent and Kilmacuagh Avenue"

Festival & Events Funding:

The District Manager advised the Members that following the advertisement of the Scheme in May, seven applications were received. The recipients and the amounts allocated were circulated and he recommended their approval.

It was proposed by Cllr. Dolan,

Seconded by Cllr. O'Brien and resolved,

"That we hereby approve of the Grant Allocations as circulated for Festivals & Events from July to September 2016"

The Director informed the Members that there is about €5,000 remaining but this will be used for further events that will arise during the remainder of the year.

Faite Ireland's Grants Scheme for Large Tourism Projects:

The Director advised the Members that Faite Ireland have announced a Grants Scheme for Large Tourism Projects 2016-2020 i.e. projects over €200,000. This is linked to Ireland's Ancient East Region of which Westmeath is a part, which means the project will have to be seen as something that will bring the history of the region to life and be framed in that context. The Council may seek expert assistance on this. He suggested that possible projects might include Boardwalk, Killenmore, Portlick or LRee islands and noted that the Town Council had set aside €190,000 for Waterfront projects which would go towards the Council's percentage to pay. Expressions of interest have to be with Faite Ireland by the end of the second week in August.

It was agreed to take the items from the Supplementary Agenda at this point of the Meeting.

To Note Commencement of Part 8 for 33 Houses at Arcadia:

The District Manager circulated the proposed lay out, site location and breakdown of the 33 houses at Arcadia. He said any submissions received under the Part 8 will be brought back to the Council for consideration. The Members welcomed the proposed housing and agreed it is urgently needed and hoped it will proceed as soon as possible.

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,

Seconded by Cllr. Farrell and resolved,

"Pursuant to the Planning & Development Acts 2000- 2015 we hereby approve the commencement of the Part 8 planning process for the construction of 33 housing units at Arcadia, Athlone"

To Note Award of Arts Grants 2016

The District Manager advised that the Arts Council provide an annual grant towards supporting projects, work creation and artists in County Westmeath. This grant is divided into three strands namely

1. Arts in Community
2. Artists' Bursaries
3. Arts Act Grants

28 applications were received within the Athlone Municipal District and these were considered by the Evaluation Committee on 30th June; all applications received funding in line with Mullingar Municipal District.

The Members noted same and observed that the amounts would not make any great difference for individual artists or projects.

Questions:

1. Cllr. T. Farrell:

Is there any update on the application for funding for the reconstruction of the old wall in Glasson?

Reply: The Council have completed the procurement of a consultant to carry out a structural survey of this wall and to prepare proposals for its repair or possible realignment. The Council is now seeking funding from TH for the costs associated with this report.

2. Cllr. T. Farrell:

Will the Municipal District clean up the Marine View area where the residents are elderly and some are incapacitated?

Reply: The Municipal District will work with the local community in any clean-up effort.

Supp. Q. When will this happen?

Reply: The Council will respond to community efforts.

3. Cllr. T. Farrell:

At the March meeting we were advised there would be a plan for improvement works at Portlick brought before us in May, has the Plan been prepared?

Reply: This plan has been delayed due to staff constraints in the Planning Section, due to the departure of some staff and the unforeseen resource demands of variations to the County Development Plan. The Plan for Phase II will be completed and presented to the District as soon as possible.

4. Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

When does the vacant site legislation come into force and when will this District be using the legislation to tackle long standing vacant sites in the area?

Reply: This is governed under the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015. A vacant site register is required to be established and maintained by each planning authority from 1st January 2017. The Council is awaiting guidance on the implementation of this Levy and as soon as this is received, the matter will be brought to the Members for their information.

5. Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

Can this Municipal District fit bollards on the wide part of the new cobbled footpath at Mardyke Street to prevent cars and vans mounting the path and parking there?

Reply: The District Engineer can assess this location to see if the Councillor's proposal would achieve the desired result. Any works would require consultation with the property owners adjacent.

6. Cllr. J. Dolan:

When are the lights on the Bridge in Athlone going to be repaired?

Reply: The public lighting on the Town Bridge is maintained by the Council's Public Lighting Maintenance Contractor and repairs carried out as required. The District Engineer is not aware of any lights being out for any prolonged period but will follow up with the Contractor.

7. Cllr. J. Dolan:

When was the last review of staffing needs for the Athlone Municipal District and what changes are recommended?

Reply: The staffing requirement for the District was undertaken in 2014 in the context of the establishment of the Municipal District. The staffing requirement identified at that time was assigned to the District Office.

Supp. Q. How do we identify the need for extra staff?

Reply: It is incumbent on senior management to look for staff and the C.E. to allocate.

8. Cllr. J. Dolan:

Have Westmeath County Council deployed any CCTV units for the detection of people dumping in the Athlone Municipal District area?

Reply: A contractor has been sourced by the Environment Section of the Council and is being deployed at selected sites within the Athlone Municipal District. Litter fines have been issued on foot of this.

Supp Q. How many units?

Reply: the contractor has been deployed at 3 locations and is being assigned further work.

9. Cllr.M. O'Brien:

How many housing estates have been taken over by the council in the Athlone Municipal District so far this year, and how many are due to be taken over this year?

Reply: No estates have been taken in charge to date in 2016.

A target of 15 estates has been set county wide to be taken in charge by the end of 2016 (12 of which are located in the AMD). However this is hugely contingent in obtaining clearance from Irish Water.

10. Cllr. M. O'Brien:

When will the new footpath be installed on the Ballycumber Road, Moate?

Reply: The District Engineer is currently in the process of making the arrangements with the contractor and it is hoped to have work complete in the next 4-6 weeks

11. Cllr. M.O'Brien:

When will footpath improvements be made on Clara Road, Moate?

Reply: These will be carried out in tandem with the works on the Ballycumber Road.

Correspondence:

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

- An acknowledgement from the Taoiseach's Office of letter regarding the increase in housing repossession cases, which he referred to the Minister for Finance.

Motions:

a) Cllr. T. Farrell:

"That Athlone Municipal District draws up a complete plan for cleaning the area around the Castle e.g. cutting of grass and collection of litter"

Response: These works are carried out as set out in the Schedule of Municipal District Works.

However, the non renewal of gateway staff has implications for same and a more detailed plan can be agreed with Tidy Towns for particular locations.

All the Members agreed with Cllr. Farrell who said this area is too important for tourism in the town, not to have a definite plan of action every year. It cannot be left to volunteers. Cllr. O'Brien suggested hiring students during the summer months to ensure the area is clean.

b) Cllr. T. Farrell:

"That the Municipal District requests Irish Water to investigate the causes of the very poor water pressure in Killinahinch, Moate"

Response: There were number of complaints of low flow and low pressure in March 2016. A leak was repaired at that time. There are currently no live work orders from Irish Water relating to complaints in this area (i.e. Irish Water has received no complaints from customers in the area), so Water Services is unaware of any problems with the supply.

That said, on foot of this Motion, pressure readings will be taken at the end of the two watermains, on the Ballymore Road and the Rosemount Road, that surround the townland of Kilnahinch. The network hydraulic model will also be checked to determine what the expected pressure is and will be compared to the actual pressure measurement and appropriate action taken, if required.

c) Cllr. T. Farrell:

"That AMD write to the Minister for Justice asking if and when the Community CCTV Scheme is being re-opened for new applications"

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

It was agreed to send a letter.

d) Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

"For this Municipal District to use the detailed report on traffic calming ramps produced recently, to begin a process of standardising ramps as necessary and to replace or remove ramps if our Engineering Department deem necessary"

Response: The District Engineer intends to commence a process of standardising the ramps later in the current year. The scope of the works will depend on the budget available each year.

e) Cllr. A. O'Rourke :

"For this Municipal District to make a strong case to Transport Infrastructure Ireland to reassess the suitability of the current junction arrangement in place at the "Cova" roundabout"

Response: The Contractor responsible for the maintenance of this junction on behalf of TII is planning to upgrade the existing mini roundabout within the next 4-6 weeks.

f) Cllr. J. Dolan :

"That AMD set out its proposals for smarter travel applications for 2017 and future years"

Response: There is no current call for applications under this scheme but the following works have been prioritised, subject to funding, for the coming years along the National Cycleway Network

- section from White Gates to Marina.
- advance EIA for bridge and cycle hub.

Other links include:

- Lissewollen to Retreat Link- Part of this is to be constructed with the Garrycastle to White Gates scheme.
- Ballymahon Road between the Sports Centre roundabout and the White Gates. Bicycle parking.

The Council also plans to engage with schools, AIT and large employers in order to maximise modal shift.

Cllr. Dolan felt this would be an opportunity to improve local bus services, possibly a pilot Park & Ride or Bike Sharing Scheme. The Director said that research would have to be undertaken to assess what might be most suitable. Maintenance costs of any scheme will have to be considered.

g) Cllr. J. Dolan:

"That this Municipal District takes steps to introduce Bye-Laws prohibiting the use of sulkies in estates and on certain minor roads"

Response: Bye-laws can be made under S37 of the Local Government Act 1994 as amended to apply throughout, or in any specified part of a Local Authority's functional area. In the first instance, it is considered that this matter should be referred to the Transportation and Planning SPC for consideration in the context of the forthcoming Road Safety Strategy for the County. In the meantime, public safety issues that arise as a result of sulky races should be referred to the Gardai under the Road Traffic Acts and Animal Welfare issues should be referred to the Department of Agriculture under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.

Cllr. Dolan felt there should be Bye-Laws deeming specific areas and times as unsuitable for any type of sulky use, as they are currently a risk to public safety. The Director stated that research will to be done on the use of sulkies and he will bring back report to a future meeting.

h) Cllr. J. Dolan:

"That this Municipal District demands that TII publish and implement an annual maintenance programme for the gullies, drains and ditches along the M6 and its environs, as promised, to the adjacent landowners"

Response: A letter can issue to TII if the Members so decide and can include any specific locations where issues have been identified with a request that these be prioritised for maintenance.

It was agreed to send a letter.

i) Cllr. F. Keena:

"That this Municipal District releases the No. 1 Battery Conservation & Restoration Group's agreed €10k budget allocation to them to cover the cost of a site feasibility study"

Response: No 1 Battery is an important protected structure and if the Members agree, a feasibility study for the protection and possible restoration of the complex would be valuable and would assist in any future decision making.

The Members supported the Motion and the Director added the results of the Feasibility Study will be brought back before the Members in due course.

j) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

"That Athlone Municipal District installs a pedestrian crossing on the Dublin Road in Moate"

Response: A survey can be carried out once the specific location is identified to see if it satisfies the warrants for a controlled crossing. The carrying out of any works will have to be considered in the context of the 2017 Roads Programme.

Cllr. O'Brien said it was at the junction of the Clara Road and the District Engineer agreed to examine it.

k) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

"That Athlone Municipal District installs bollards on the footpath outside the entrance to Church View in Moate in order to deter motorists from parking on the footpath and improving the sight line of residents leaving the estate"

Response: The District Engineer can assess this location to see if the Councillor's proposal would achieve the desired result. Any works would require consultation with the property owners adjacent.

l) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

"That Athlone Municipal District declares its opposition to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government regarding the proposed amalgamation of library services in Westmeath and Longford"

Response: The public library service in Ireland is a core Local Government function. *Opportunities for All*, the public library strategy 2013-2017 set an ambitious target for development and recommended a review of library service management and service delivery in order to establish stronger, more effective and efficient public libraries. Westmeath County Council in conjunction with the library staff are currently working through the strategy.

All the Members agreed that Westmeath should object and support the 50 staff opposed to the move. They felt Westmeath should look after its own services and agreed that Cllr. Hogan will raise at CPG level.

m) Cllr A. McManus:

"That this Municipal District writes to Minister Richard Bruton and calls on him to address the issue of funding for the new building at Coosan National School"

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

The Members unanimously supported the Motion, agreeing that children were being educated in unfit buildings, not conducive to learning. It was agreed to write to the Minister.

n) Cllr. A. McManus:

"That this Municipal District reinstates the footpaths from Garrycastle to A.I.T. as a matter of urgency"

Response: The reinstatement of the footpaths on this stretch of road is a matter for the contractor working for ESB networks once they have completed their underground works.

o) Cllr. A. McManus:

"That this Municipal District informs the Members of any plan (if any) to address the significant road failures on the N55 Glasson Village and if it necessitates road closures, can a plan be put in place to assist and inform businesses in the area"

Response: Funding has been allocated by TII to carry out the necessary repairs. The District Engineer is currently making the necessary arrangements with the contractor to carry out the works. Full road closures will be kept to a minimum and will be advertised.

Cllr. McManus asked that Flashboards be used to advertise the closures and that all affected businesses be written to with the relevant details of closures.

A.O.B.

Cllr. O'Rourke referred to the problems with Console at the moment and said that we are fortunate in Athlone to have one of their Centres, which offers an excellent service. It will not be affected by the controversy. All the

Members concurred and it was agreed to follow up on the District's letter to the Regulator and Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform, on the capping of salaries in the charity sector.

Cllr. Farrell wished the Rosemont Community well in the upcoming Pride of Place competition.

The District Manager advised Members that a ceremony to unveil road signs for 1916 signatories and the plaque for Michael Burke can be arranged before the September Meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MAYOR

DATE