

Minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 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: Pat Keating, District Manager
Pat Nally, District Engineer
Gerry McCormack, District Administrator
Anne McNamara, Assistant Staff Officer

Votes of Congratulations:

All the Members joined with Cllr. Farrell in congratulating Mick McCallum and wishing him a long and happy upcoming retirement after 38 years working for the Council.

Cllr. Hogan expressed congratulations to the Willow Park Ladies Football Team on their many recent successes, Garrycastle GAA Club on their 35th Anniversary and St. Peter's on winning the CCFL. It was agreed to advance the previously agreed annual event to mark such successes. The Mayor agreed to look into doing this.

Cllr. McManus welcomed 4 new businesses to the town, Eddie Rocketts, Sketchers, Sosterne Grene and Anniehall Vintage and suggested a letter of welcome be written to them.

Votes of Sympathy:

All the Members wished to be associated with expressions of sympathy to the following:
Sonny Gallagher, a former Council staff member and his Family, on the death of his wife Peggy,
the English family on the death of Cecil and the Nolan Family on the death of Vincent.

Minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr. Keena,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the May Monthly Meeting which was held on the 3rd May 2016"

Matters Arising:

The District Engineer advised the Members that it was hoped to commence the works on the Main Street of Glasson in around 4 weeks time and that they will be carried out with traffic lights to the greatest extent possible.

The District Engineer advised that the signs naming roads to commemorate 1916 leaders will be erected over the summer and a ceremony will be organised.

Presentation from Coillte:

Mr. Noel Cassidy and Mr. Pat Brady attended the Meeting from Coillte and outlined ongoing works in the five forests in the District. They advised they have a social mandate to work with communities and councils and will facilitate a future meeting on site in Carn Park to discuss future possibilities for

improving the amenity. Mr. Cassidy assured the Members that Coillte is always happy to meet with those wanting to improve forested amenities.

Commemorative plaque for Michael Burke:

The District Manager outlined the proposed wording and location of the plaque to commemorate Michael Burke, a member of Athlone Urban Council who was shot and killed by the Black and Tans in 1920. All agreed the wording and location was appropriate.

It was proposed by Cllr. McManus,
Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,
“We hereby approve of the wording and location as circulated, of the Plaque to commemorate Cllr. Michael Burke”

Community Grants 2016

The District manager advised that the division of the grant between districts was approved by Members under the General Municipal Allocation in November 2015. The budget sum for the various community grants was adopted at the budget meeting in December. Following consideration by an executive valuation committee, the following was recommended to the Members for approval.

In response to a query from the Members, the District Manager advised that further applications under Residents Associations and Community Action Grants can be received.

Tidy Towns:

This allocation was in accordance with positions obtained in the Tidy Towns competition

It was proposed by Cllr. Keena,
Seconded by Cllr. O'Rourke and resolved,
“We hereby approve of the distribution of the Community Grant Allocation to the Tidy Towns in accordance with the list circulated”

Community Grants 2016 for Residents Associations:

Cllr. Keena said that the amounts being allocated to some associations were very small and all the Members agreed that more monies should be made available in the Budget for 2017. They also felt that associations and groups should be better informed about the availability of grants and the processes involved in applying for them. It was agreed to circulate to the Members, a list of all the Residents Associations in the County.

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell,
Seconded by Cllr. O'Brien and resolved,
“We hereby approve of the distribution of the Community Grant Allocation to the Residents Associations in accordance with the list circulated”

Community Grants 2016 for Community Action Schemes:

It was proposed by Cllr. Keena,
Seconded by Cllr. Farrell and resolved,
“We hereby approve of the distribution of the Community Grant Allocation to the Community Action Schemes in accordance with the list circulated”

Community Grants 2016 for Christmas Lights:

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,
Seconded by Cllr. Farrell and resolved,
“We hereby approve of the distribution of the Community Grant Allocation for Christmas Lights in accordance with the list circulated”

Community Diaspora Grants 2016:

The District Manager advised that this item was for noting as the funding is from IPB, Failte Ireland and the Council (equally). Members noted the distribution of these Grant and asked that it be advertised better in the Athlone district next year as the amount allocated this year, was very small in comparison to the Mullingar District. The District Manager undertook to look into this.

Severe weather allocation to AMD Roads Programme 2016:

The District Engineer advised that additional funding had been provided by the Department and circulated a revised expenditure of the €2m allocation. The Members welcomed the return of the full amount to the Athlone District.

Questions:

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

Will the Municipal District repair potholes and replace bollards at both junctions of the Ballykeeran/Annagh Road (L5458).

Reply: The District Engineer will arrange for the missing bollards to be notified to TII for replacement by their contractor and arrange for the potholes to be filled.

Supp. Q: When?

Reply: In the next few weeks.

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

When will the Municipal District replace the Traffic Light knocked down in Glasson Village at the pedestrian crossing, as it is in a very dangerous state?

Reply: The Council's contractor has ordered a replacement pole and it is hoped it will be in place very shortly.

Supp. Q: When?

Reply: In the hands of the contractor but will be followed up.

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

When will a "Stop" sign be erected at Curragh Cross in Rosemount??

Reply: The District Engineer will arrange for a sign to be erected at this cross in the next month.

4. **Cllr. A. O'Rourke:**

When will the final measures on the road in the Baylough area be completed, namely the coloured road surface path for pedestrians outside the Grove Pub, the speed ramp close to Abbygarth and the associated adjustments to the road which will slow traffic??

Reply: Transportation section are currently finalising the design for these works which will be presented to the members at the July meeting. The works will then be carried out shortly thereafter.

5. **Cllr. A. O'Rourke:**

When will this Municipal District complete the footpath along the front of the old SDS building on the Coosan Road?

Reply: The Council has awarded these works to a contractor who has already commenced works. It is hoped to have them completed in the coming weeks.

6. **Cllr. A. O'Rourke:**

Have Westmeath County Council prepared a list of the land owned by the council in this county that is zoned for development and if so, can the members be provided with this list?

Reply: The lands in the ownership of Westmeath County Council and zoned for development (excluding sporting and recreational) in the Athlone Municipal District are as follows:

Brawney	25.0 acres
Arcadia	4.7 acres
Lissywoolen (rear of NLA)	0.3 acres
Lissywoolen (opposite Blyry)	4.0 acres
Adj to McCormack Park	1.4 acres
Blackberry Lane	2.0 acres
Loughanaskin	5.0 acres
Garrycastle Business Park	6.0 acres
Clara Road Moate	3.0 acres

The list for the Mullingar is under preparation.

Supp. Q: Can a map be circulated?

Reply: Yes.

7. Cllr. J. Dolan:

When are the water mains works at Fardrum going to be complete?

Reply: It is anticipated that the water main works will be completed by the end of June.

Supp. Q: When?

Reply: The District Engineer will follow up with Water Services.

8. Cllr. J. Dolan:

When is the footpath on the Mount Temple Road, Moate going to be extended?

Reply: It is planned to carry out these works later in the year subject to consultation with the adjacent residents.

9. Cllr. J. Dolan:

When is the road failure on the Moneen Road at John Stone's house going to be repaired?

Reply: It is planned to do this in the next couple of weeks.

10. Cllr. A. McManus:

Could the Municipal District give an update on the minor works that have been carried out throughout Athlone with regard to flood damage?

Reply: The Council have installed control measures on the surface water drainage outfalls at various locations where flood defences were erected during the recent flooding event.

11. Cllr. A. McManus:

When are the footpaths being replaced at Ardbrae Park, Athlone?

Reply: It is planned to carry out these works later in the year.

12. Cllr. A. McManus:

Can the Council please include the details of the Athlone Marina on Athlone.ie?

Reply: The District Manager will arrange for this to be done.

13. 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: Ownership details for these have not been established but they can be considered under derelict sites legislation.

14. Cllr. F. Keena:

What is the delay in erecting Cumann Na mBan names plates both on the road and river level of the Athlone Relief Road bridge?

Reply: This matter will be pursued and an update will be given at the September meeting.

15. Cllr.F. Keena:

In the interest of enhancing the Town Centre can this Municipal District give a full update on progress made to get the owners of the Athlone Shopping Centre plus the adjoining multi story carpark to clean up their property facing onto St. Mary's Square which in my opinion is in a state of dereliction?

Reply: This site was previously on the derelict sites register and action was being taken by the Council under a Section 11 Notice. Improvement works were carried out and the site was removed from the register. A further inspection was carried out in the past week and it is concluded that the site should continue to be monitored but that no action under derelict sites is merited at this time.

Supp. Q: Can the owner be requested to clean up the site?

Reply: Yes, a letter will be sent to the owner.

Correspondence:

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

- Request from Cllr. O'Rourke to grant a Civic Honour to Athlone Credit Union to mark its 50th anniversary.

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell,

Seconded by Cllr. Dolan and resolved,

"We hereby approve of requesting the CPG to consider granting a Civic Honour to Athlone Credit Union on its 50th anniversary this year"

Motions:

a) Cllr. T. Farrell:

"That the District Engineer examines the overhanging trees along the road at Annaghgorta Bog"

Response: The owner of one property has been contacted regarding concerns raised about overhanging trees. The District Engineer will follow this up and a formal notice will be issued if required.

b) Cllr. T. Farrell:

"That the Municipal District updates Members on the status of Coolatore Quarry and considers erecting hedging to screen it off on both sides"

Response: The former Quarry at Coolatore, Rosemount, is in the effective control of Westmeath County Council and the Council will give favourable consideration to the planting of a screening hedge along both sides of the road in the context of the 2017 Budget.

c) Cllr. T. Farrell:

"That the Municipal District considers building low density housing and a playground on their lands at Glasson"

Response: There is no current intention to build in Glasson but it can be considered in the context of additional projects under the Social Housing strategy. Any playground will be considered in line with current playground policy.

All the Members supported the Motion. They felt the LAP adopted for Glasson was very weak and the Village needed housing and a playground. It was noted that the playground was previously agreed to be provided at Portlick. Cllr. Keena added that he is currently working with a group about the provision of a playground.

d) Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

"For this Municipal District to examine and address the footpaths along Abbey Road as far as St Kieran's Terrace in order to make it more suitable for wheelchair users"

Response: The District Engineer will arrange an inspection of the footpaths in question and any works identified can be considered in the context of the 2017 Roads Programme

e) Cllr. A. O'Rourke :

"For Westmeath County Council to allocate €10,000 from our 2016 budget provision under 'Recreation & Amenity' to go towards an upgrade of the Promenade area in Athlone"

Response: The promenade area in Athlone is an important recreation and amenity area and if the Members agree to this allocation, consideration could be given to upgrading works in line with details from the EIA currently being finalised.

All the Members supported this Motion and it was agreed to allocate €10,000 for upgrading the Promenade. Cllr. Hogan advised being mindful of the works that will have to be done for the new bridge and that possibly the improvement works should be concentrated at the Town Bridge end of the Promenade.

f) Cllr. A. O'Rourke :

"For this Municipal District to call on the Taoiseach and Minister for Finance to establish a high level working group of relevant state and banking interests to urgently deal with the staggering number of property repossession cases coming before the courts"

Response: Letters can issue if the Members so decide.

All supported this Motion and agreed the crisis has reached a national emergency level, with far reaching social and economic effects. It was agreed to write these letters.

g) Cllr. J. Dolan :

"That this Municipal District investigate the possibility of providing plastic recycling facilities (milk containers etc.) in Moate and other smaller villages in the District"

Response: There are many different types of plastic and not all of them are recyclable here in Ireland. The more common ones are PET (Polyethylene Terephthalate) & HDPE (High Density Polyethylene), usually marked number "1" & "2" respectively, and these are found in your typical drinks bottles. These plastics are relatively easy to recycle and in Westmeath, they are collected at the kerbside by the Waste Collector, no less frequently than every 2 weeks. The problem with collecting them at your local bring bank, which will have receptacles for the different coloured glass, cans and clothes, is that the drinks bottles occupy such a relatively large volume with respect to their weight. Therefore, if we were to use a standard receptacle to collect plastic bottles, it would fill up very quickly and require the bring bank to be serviced much more often. This would add significantly to the cost of recycling the material.

At the moment, it remains more cost effective to collect the plastic bottles at the kerbside. Plastic bottle are also collected at the two Civic Amenity Sites in Athlone & Mullingar, where a large (and expensive) compactor is used to compress the bottles.

Following a discussion, Cllr. Dolan agreed to liaise with the District Engineer who will collect plastic recycling from a school on a pilot basis.

h) Cllr. J. Dolan:

"That this Municipal District completes a traffic survey on the Clara Road, Moate and considers putting ramps on it"

Response: A traffic survey can be carried out on this road if the Members so wish. The provision of ramps or other measures will have to be considered in the context of the 2017 Roads Programme.

The Members supported the Motion and advised that alongside the old cottages might be the best place for a ramp.

It was agreed to take Motion i and p together.

i) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District request an urgent meeting with Failte Ireland to discuss the relocation of the Tourist Office to either the Luan Galley or to the Civic Centre”

Response: The possible relocation of the Tourist Office from the Castle is being considered by the Board of Athlone Arts and Tourism.

p) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That this Municipal District, in consultation with the relevant authorities, consider the future relocation of the Athlone Tourist Office to Athlone Marina, which will be central to the East/West Greenway”

Response: The possible relocation of the tourist office from the Castle is being considered by the Board of Athlone Arts and Tourism.

The Members all agreed that the Tourist Office needs to be in a more prominent position and more accessible to all. While Cllr. Hogan suggested that it be re located at the Marina, it was agreed that it is more urgent to get Failte Ireland to agree to move and the new location can then be discussed further. The District Manager pointed out that a move from the Castle will incur a cost for Failte Ireland but the Members felt the Tourist Office needed to move and the space in the Castle could be put to better use. The District Manager added that Athlone Arts & Tourism are in discussion with Failte Ireland about the tourist office and will advise them of the Members views. It was agreed that the Cllrs O’Rourke and Dolan would represent the District in any ongoing discussions.

j) Cllr. A. McManus:

“That this Municipal District leave the brackets up on the bridge and replace the Drama Festival banners with banners citing “Destination Athlone –the Heart of Shopping” with immediate effect”

Response: The District Engineer is working closely with Destination Athlone Marketing Group to ensure festivals, events and Destination Athlone banners are interchanged to maintain signs throughout the tourist season and to accommodate hanging baskets.

While all agreed that this is a good idea, the District Engineer pointed out that the flowers and banners cannot be there at the one time. It was understood however that the brackets will be used on an ongoing basis to advertise events throughout the year.

k) Cllr. A. McManus:

“That this Municipal District discusses the possibility of altering the original agreement at Connolly Street, Athlone in order to facilitate the issuing of keys to all residents and have two dedicated parking bays for use by contractors carrying out works on the Street, by means of a permit system”

Response: The District Engineer can investigate if such a proposal could be implemented.

Cllr. McManus welcomed the response as she felt “working” permits would greatly alleviate some of the problems in the Street.

l) Cllr. A. McManus:

“That this Municipal District writes to Minister Richard Bruton and calls on him to address the opening of an ASD Unit at Drumraney National School, as a matter of urgency”

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

The Members unanimously supported the Motion and it was agreed to write the letter.

m) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That this Municipal District extend the Plaza in front of the new Moate Library, out to the edge of the road”

Response: The District Engineer will prepare an estimate of the cost involved and a budget for the works can then be identified if the Members so decide.

The Members unanimously agreed that the Plaza should be extended and this would prevent cars parking there all day. The District Engineer said the works would be done from the roads maintenance budget if possible.

n) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That this Municipal District provides a pelican pedestrian crossing/raised platform on the road at the eastern end of Assumption Road to Beechpark in the interest of public safety”

Response: A survey can be carried out at this location 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.

o) Cllr. F. Keena:

“Following a decision at the recent CPG meeting that this Municipal District now passes a resolution for the Cathaoirleach of WCC to host a Civic Recognition for the Defence Forces, Gardai and all Blue Light Services to acknowledge the excellent ongoing support they give to Westmeath County Council and indeed the wider community at all times”

Response: An address of recognition to the Defence Forces and Emergency Services can be organised in the Civic Centre if the Athlone Municipal District Members so decide.

It was decided to host the Civic Honour on Friday June 17th at 11.30am in the Civic Centre.

q) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That Athlone Municipal District will provide audio devices at bottlebanks to discourage people from discarding boxes and other receptacles at these sites”

Response: Environment section is researching with other local authorities whether such devices are cost effective and whether deployment may be appropriate on a pilot basis.

Cllr. Hogan said that they had now been deemed cost effective and he asked that they be provided.

r) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That this Municipal District update Members on the maintenance programme of car parks and other amenities and the Tidy Town’s voluntary involvement in same”

Response: Maintenance works in the District are carried out by the Council in line with the agreed Schedule of Municipal District Works. The District Administrator meets with Athlone Tidy Town’s on a monthly basis to discuss their planned works.

Cllr. Hogan felt that there were more weeds and rubbish in car-parks than is usual and the District Engineer advised that there was a difficulty with the weed spraying contractor but this has now been sorted. The Tidy Towns have no direct involvement with these works.

A.O.B.

Cllr. Keena informed the Members that there will be Mass in the Carmelite Church in Moate on Friday evening as part of the 1916 commemorations with a walk to the Garden of Remembrance.

Cllr. Farrell stated that there had been a fire about half a mile from Athlone in the middle of the cycleway, with a half dozen people around it.

In committee, there was a brief discussion on the Athlone Regional Sports Centre

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MAYOR

DATE