

DRAFT Minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting which was held in the Community Centre, Streamstown at 2.00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 3rd 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

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Streamstown Community Centre and thanked the Committee for the invitation to hold the Meeting in the Centre.

Votes of Congratulations:

The Members joined with Cllr. Hogan's congratulations to the Garrycastle U-14 Girls Team on their recent success. They also congratulated Gabrielle McFadden and commiserated with Cllr. O'Rourke on their Seanad runs.

Minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr. Dolan,
Seconded by Cllr. O'Brien and resolved,
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the April Monthly Meeting which was held on April 4th 2016"

Matters Arising:

The Director advised Cllr. Dolan that the Council's legal advisors are prioritising the action against the illegal settlement outside Moate but no Court date has been set yet.

He advised Cllr. Hogan that many enquiries have been received about the LIS but only 1 application and he urged communities to apply. Those who had applied in the past must reapply.

In response to Cllr. Keena's query about the allotments at Brawny, the Director said that he would request Property Management to contact the residents and provide something in the short term, but the land there is tied up in broader issues.

The District Manager told Cllr. Keena that he would request a presentation on REDZ for the July Meeting.

Cllr. Keena asked for an update on greenway funding and this was discussed with Motion (c)

Cllr. T. Farrell:

"That the Members be updated on the status of the funding in relation to the section of the cycleway from Garrycastle to the Whitegates, as this will service our schools and sports facilities and will also provide parking for all users.

Response: 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.

The heavy vegetation on this section has been cleared and the Council can go to construction as soon as funding has been awarded.

As this stretch of cycleway would be so beneficial to the town in so many ways, Cllr. Farrell proposed there should be a Deputation to the Minister for Transport to progress the matter of funding. This was seconded by Cllr. Dolan and it was resolved that a Deputation go to the Minister, the agenda to be agreed before going.

Cllr. Hogan pointed out that there are difficulties west of the river with the greenway and these should be resolved before worrying about the Bridge. The Director said that work is ongoing on the Galway/Roscommon issues and the EIS for the Bridge will be submitted to An Bord Pleanála in the very near future and will then be available to the public to view and to make their submissions.

Nomination of Members to attend the EPF in Latvia:

It was agreed that the members would agree representation with the District manager.

Nomination of Member to the Heritage Forum:

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,

Seconded by Cllr. Farrell and resolved,

“We hereby agree that Cllr. Dolan be the representative for Athlone Municipal District on the Heritage Forum”

The renaming of roads after 1916 Signatories:

The District Manager advised the Members that the suggested names for 5 to date un-named roads had been advertised, seeking submissions but none were received. He recommended that the roads be named as listed and signs erected in due course.

Cllr. Hogan welcomed this as it was on foot of his Motion some months back and he asked that there be a small ceremony at the unveiling of the signage. All the Members supported this and it was agreed to do so.

Update on Baylin/Mount Temple Road:

This was taken in conjunction with Motion O from Cllr. Keena:

Cllr. F. Keena:

“That this Municipal District provides a full report on the closure of the Baylin / Mount Temple Road and indicates a timeframe as to when it will be reopened”

Response: The structural failure of this road is caused by the washing out of fine silt from depth under the road and adjacent lands. This is causing the road and land to settle rapidly and unpredictably. The District Engineer is monitoring the situation carefully and is of the view that the area has yet to stabilise.

Until then, there is little that the Council can do. However, once the area does stabilise, the Engineer will repair and open the road again but its future stability cannot be guaranteed.

In the meantime, the road must remain closed in the interests of public safety. The District Engineer will keep the Members updated on this issue.

Cllr. Keena asked that the public be kept informed of what is happening and why and this was agreed.

Proposals for repair of flood damaged roads:

The Director stated that €1.75m will be allocated to the repair of weather damaged roads in the Athlone District and €1.25m in the Mullingar District as they have 2/3 of the roads in the County. He said the Council applied has sought additional funding under the second tranche and he is confident this will be obtained. The Members unanimously disagreed with the cut in the allocation for Athlone from the original €2M. Cllr. Dolan proposed that €2M be allocated to Athlone and Cllr. Keena seconded this. It was then agreed to get composite lists of exact road locations to be repaired in each District and circulate them to Members before the next County Council Meeting on May 30th 2016.

Consideration of Galway's candidacy for European Capital of Culture:

The District Manager advised the Members that this issue arose at a recent Destination Athlone meeting. Two European cities are nominated each year as "Capitals of Culture" and in 2020 the cities will be from Ireland and Croatia. Three Irish locations (Galway, Limerick and a combined group from the South East) are competing for the title and Galway has asked Athlone for its support in light of shared tourism objectives. He advised this was supported by Destination Athlone.

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell,

Seconded by Cllr. O'Brien and resolved,

"We hereby agree to give our support to Galway's bid to be the European Capital of Culture in 2020"

Date for the AGM:

It was proposed by Cllr. Dolan,

Seconded by Cllr. McManus and resolved,

"We hereby agree to hold the Annual Meeting of Athlone Municipal District at 2pm on Tuesday 7th June 2016 prior to the Monthly Meeting which will now take place at 2.30pm"

Questions:

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

When will the repairs to the bridge at Drumraney National School be carried out as it is in a very dangerous condition?

Reply: These works are scheduled to be completed within the next 2 weeks.

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

Can the Municipal District get an update on the opening up of the entrance for the cycleway at Streamstown due to its strategic location along the cycleway?

This was taken with Motion (f)

Cllr. J. Dolan:

"That this Municipal Authority engages with the local community group in Streamstown to find and develop an access to the greenway in order to help develop the old Station.

Reply: Streamstown is a very important point on the Mullingar Athlone Greenway, as it is the historic access point to the railway line and serves a wide hinterland. Furthermore, the Council proposes to establish a cycle link from Streamstown to Kilbeggan and on to the Grand Canal in County Offaly via the now filled in Kilbeggan Grand Canal Link.

However, ownership of the access road to Streamstown Station passed into private ownership some years ago and as a result, is not available to the Council to provide an access for Greenway users.

Notwithstanding this fact, it is incumbent on the Council to establish a link at Streamstown and such a link will be made over the coming weeks. However, the provision of a long term link to appropriate standards may take some time and will require significant funding.

Works to the old station may be undertaken with access from Lisnagree, provided that such works are agreed in advance with the Council and only involve property that is in the control of the Council.

Supp. Q. When will the link be made?

Reply: A temporary link will be done before the next meeting.

3) Cllr. T. Farrell:

When will the road be repaired in Glasson Village opposite Grogan's Pub, as it is currently in a very dangerous state?

Reply: An application has been made to TII for funding to carry out the necessary repairs and they will be carried out as soon as approval to proceed is received.

4) Cllr. J. Dolan:

When is the restoration programme starting to repair the flood damaged roads?

Reply: This programme has already commenced in tandem with the main Road Restoration Programme for the District.

5) Cllr. J. Dolan:

How many RAS houses have been leased by the Council in the Athlone Municipal District in 2015?

Reply: At 31st December 2015 the Council had a total of 691 housing units within the County contracted under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and the Leasing Scheme. Of this total, 249 are properties located in the Athlone Municipal District.

6) Cllr. J. Dolan:

How many sites or potential sites for building social housing are in the Athlone Municipal District and where are they located?

Reply: There are numerous such sites in the District, primarily in Athlone, where the greatest housing need exists. The Council is in possession of some lands, at Brawney, Arcadia, Cornamagh and Moate that may be suitable. However, there are many other factors that must be taken into account in the development of social housing and the site that is being advanced by the Housing Capital Team in Athlone at the present time is for approximately 35 units at Arcadia.

Supp. Q. Could this be an item on June Agenda?

Reply: It is an item on the Agenda for the County Council Meeting.

7) Cllr. A. McManus:

When will the double yellow lines be replaced at Roslevin Lawns as there is an urgent need for them?

Reply: These will be reinstated within the next 2-3 weeks, weather permitting, in tandem with other works in the town.

8) Cllr. A. McManus:

Can the Council in this years budgets resurface the laneway in Cartron Drive?

Reply: This is not a public road and is not included in the current year's programme. The Council can however assist the local residents with materials such as chippings if they want to undertake some works themselves.

9) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

When will the community events board be erected in Moate?

Reply: It is planned to have the main board for the sign erected within the next 2 weeks. The header and footer signs will be completed once they are procured.

10) Cllr. F. Keena:

What is the delay in providing a traffic calming ramp on the Coosan side of the Montree / St. Kieran's Tce road?

Reply: This ramp was reinstated recently.

11) Cllr. F. Keena:

What is this Municipal District's plan to address the dangerous derelict house in Lloyd's Lane?

Reply: This property is on the Derelict Sites Register and is also a protected structure. The Council is liaising with the owners to have a structural assessment of the building undertaken as soon as possible. Thereafter, it is intended that the structure would be restored by the current owners or put on the market.

Supp. Q. When was the last time the owner was contacted?

Reply: In February. There are ongoing discussions as all are anxious to bring this matter to a successful conclusion.

12) Cllr. F. Keena:

What plans has this Municipal District got in relation to the provision of dedicated local bus stops within its area?

Reply: Athlone Municipal District has no plan to provide dedicated local bus stops, over and above those already provided. However, new stops will be included as required in new road projects and in conjunction with the development of new housing areas.

Supp. Q. Can we write to local operators asking them to use designated stops only, in the interest of public safety?

Response: Yes we will write.

Correspondence:

The District Administrator informed the Members that the following correspondence had been received and it was agreed to circulate the letters.

- Office of Minister for Finance – acknowledgement of letter re introduction of pay ceilings for higher posts across the charities sector.
- OPW – response on river maintenance of the Shannon and responsibilities.
- Minister for Defence – further acknowledgement of letter re museum at Custume Barracks – full response soon.

There was a Press Notice about the Shannon Flood Risk Agency Co-Ordination Working Group holding an Open day in the Civic Centre on Thursday, 5th May at 11am and the public were urged to attend.

Motions:

a) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this Municipal District carries out a Safety Review at the crossroads in Loughnavalley village.

Response: Works were carried out on this junction a number of years ago as part of a low cost safety scheme. The District Engineer is not aware of any safety concerns or incidents

at it. It should be noted that this junction sits on the boundary of both Districts and is maintained by the Mullingar Municipal District.

b) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That the Members be advised on whose responsibility the fencing along the new cycleway is because there is a lot of confusion over it”

Response: Fencing along the Mullingar Athlone Railway Line was previously maintained by CIE because it was a railway corridor. However, its status has now changed to a cycleway and the normal requirements as set out in Section 8 of the Animal Welfare Act 2013 apply. As such, responsibility to maintain fences rests with the owners of animals and on others not to interfere with such fences.

The Members felt the onus was on the Council to replace hedging they removed and they thought that if the Council gave the materials to farmers/landowners they would do the fencing themselves and maintain it. The Director said this possibility may be looked at.

d) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal Authority liaises with the different Tidy Towns Groups along the cycleway in order to try to prevent the dumping of litter on the cycleway”

Response: Westmeath County Council would welcome the involvement of Tidy Towns Groups and the wider community in maintaining this very important recreational and tourist infrastructure. The Community Warden is available to liaise with and assist Tidy Towns Groups as required.

All agreed that community involvement is vital for this and the Director agreed that the Council will provide litter picks and bags for groups. The District Manager said that a contractor for mobile cctv has been hired and is currently monitoring 2 sites in the District. The Members welcomed this.

e) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal Authority examines ways of preventing anti social behaviour at Clonbrock Court.

Response: The Council is willing to engage with the residents of Clonbruck Court and An Garda Siochana in this regard.

Cllr. Dolan asked if the District might contact the Community College to make them aware of what is happening and to see if they can do something to stop it. Also the Director agreed to cover a short distance of this area when doing the cycleway but it will be expensive.

g) Cllr. A. McManus:

“That this Municipal Authority carries out emergency works at Coosan Point riverfront and slipway”

Response: Resurfacing works have commenced and will be completed once the lake water level drops sufficiently.

Cllr. McManus asked if the road into Lough Ree Park will be included but was advised not, though there is money ring-fenced for it.

Cllr. Hogan asked that the Community be given assistance covering the steel rods protruding from the ground as they are very dangerous and the District Engineer agreed to provide the materials.

h) Cllr. A. McManus:

“That this Municipal Authority put in traffic calming measures in Kilmacoo Lane as promised”

Response: The District Engineer will present a design proposal to the July District meeting for the approval of the Members and subject to approval will carry out the works shortly thereafter.

i) Cllr. A. McManus:

“That this Municipal Authority cut the overgrown bushes on the R915 (Ballymahon Rd) on the left hand side at the bridge”

Response: The District Engineer will investigate this and issue appropriate notices on the landowner.

All the Members supported this Motion.

j) Cllr. M. O’Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District writes to the incoming relevant Ministers and call on them to address the severe rising costs of insurance premiums as a matter of urgency”

Response: Letters can issue if the Members so decide.

Cllr. O’Brien said that there is a serious claims culture in Ireland and awards and legal costs are too high. He suggested we advise Ministers to put statutory limits on these and thus remove the reasons for escalating costs. The Members supported the Motion and it was agreed to write.

k) Cllr. M. O’Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District installs a ramp at Ava Maria Park, Moate”

Response: This proposal can be reviewed and considered in the context of the Members’ priorities for funding as part of the 2017 Roads Programme.

l) Cllr. M. O’Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District paints the local authority housing development at Newtown Corner, Moate”

Response: Westmeath County Council has no provision in its Housing Maintenance budget for 2016 for the exterior painting of houses. With regard to Newtown Corner, some of these houses are privately owned and were a Resident’s Association in existence, perhaps an application for a grant through the Community Grant scheme could assist householders in improving the exterior of their dwellings.

The Members felt the Council owned houses should be painted.

m) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That this Municipal District considers developing a link road between the Brawny Road and the Retreat Road and another between Brawny and Garrycastle in the interest of improving traffic flow around the town”

Response: Key elements of the access and movement strategy in the Lissywollen South Local Area Plan 2008 is to provide a north-south avenue with priority for buses, cyclists and pedestrians connecting Retreat Road and the Brawney Road crossing the disused railway line and an extension to the Brawney Road to Garrycastle.

The development of these roads is envisaged in tandem with the development of the lands to the east of the Athlone Town Stadium, which should take place over the next five to ten years.

The Members felt links should be provided sooner but the Director advised that there is no money available to provide them and the Railway Field Road is the first road priority for Athlone. The links will happen over time.

n) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That this Municipal District considers creating a regular farmer's / food market in Athlone in conjunction with Athlone Chamber and Destination Athlone”

Response: Such a market would be welcomed and the Council would be glad to assist. However, the Council is not in a position to take a lead in such an initiative.

While the Members agreed this would be good for tourism, they said existing markets and rate paying traders must not be affected. However there is an interest in high quality markets and Destination Athlone is also available to support efforts by interested groups.

A.O.B.

Cllr. Dolan asked when will Moate Library reopen and was advised that the books are currently being put in but no date is set yet.

The District Manager informed the Members that the AGM of Athlone Arts & Tourism will take place before the June Meeting.

The Mayor wished local man Declan Slevin well in his “Road to Rio” cycle to raise funds. It is being held in Moate Community Centre on May 13th at 8pm.

In-Committee:

The Director advised the Members that the Boundary Review Committee are having a meeting in the Civic Centre on May 13th at 11.30am and invited them to attend. He said the Executive would meet with them beforehand at 10am and this was agreed.

Again the Mayor thanked Nicky McCormack and the Streamstown Community Centre Committee for their warm welcome and hospitality.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MAYOR

DATE