

**Minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup> 2016**

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**Attendance:**

Mayor: Cllr. T. Farrell

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

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

**Votes of Congratulations:**

All the Members joined the Mayor in congratulating Kevin Boxer Moran in his success in the Election and highly commended Cllr Hogan on his performance.

**Votes of Sympathy:**

All the Members expressed sympathy to the McGuire Family on the recent death of Hugh.

**Minutes:**

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,

Seconded by Cllr. O'Brien and resolved,

"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the February Monthly Meeting which was held on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2016"

**Matters Arising:**

The Director advised the Members that he would liaise with the Transportation Section and circulate to Members. Cllr Keena asked what the timeframe was for the Traffic Calming at Garrycastle & Montree. The District Engineer advised that re-surfacing would be carried out next week.

Cllr O'Rourke requested an update on the Railway Field Acquisition and was advised that traffic studies are ongoing. Cllr Paul Hogan enquired as to the closing date for the Public Consultation of street naming 1916. The Director advised that the closing date is the 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 and that this item would be on the April Agenda.

**Presentation from Athlone Community College:**

The Mayor and Members welcomed Louise Egan, Fiona Molloy and Sarah Denby from Athlone Community College, to the Meeting to give the presentation, which outlined details on Rewetted and Drained Bogs, CO2 Omissions and Botanical composition. The Members thanked them for their superb presentation which highlighted the importance of wetted bogs on reducing emissions and as potential flood relief.

**Athlone Electoral Area Public Participation Network:**

Hugh Farrell & Annette Barr Jordan identified local issues to be considered in the Westmeath County Council budget allocation for 2016. The Document included 4 Theme Issues – 1) Access, 2) Facilities, 3) Road Safety, 4) Other.

The Members thanked them for their submission. Cllr O Rourke highlighted the issue of the perimeter fence being broken at Brawny and causing issues. The Director advised that this fence had been fixed numerous times. Cllr Hogan asked that a suitable premises be found for Tonnta. The Director advised that rural areas had benefited from Leader funding in the past and under the new programme Athlone can now be considered for such funding also.

### **Report on Local Improvement Schemes:**

The Director requested that this Item be deferred to the next Meeting as it requires approval of the full Council.

### **Festival & Event Fund:**

The Director advised the Members that funding to the end of June of €28,250 is recommended. A second round of applications will be invited in May for the second half of the year and a further recommendation will be brought before the District Members. The Director advised that funding was generally provided for festivals that were not self financing. The recommendations were approved.

### **Flooding Report:**

The Report in relation to the above was circulated to the Members. The Director advised that the flooding which commenced on the 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2015 is the worst recorded flooding incident in the history of Athlone District. Over 100,000 sandbags were made and distributed. Numerous Pumps were operating. The cost to-date amounts to €1.22m. There was a discussion on supporting rural areas and short term measure funding applications and assessment of road raising works to rural areas. It was agreed that a delegation would seek to meet the Minister when the CFRAMS report is finalised.

### **Questions:**

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

What is the result of the Safety Review at Glasson Village?

**Reply: A review is currently being carried out by Westmeath County Council in conjunction with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in relation to the N55 Southbound approach to Glasson. It is anticipated that additional safety measures will be implemented in the current year.**

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

Can this Municipal District be given an update on the current status of Phase 2 of the Portlick Amenity Plan?

**Reply: Some progress has been made with this and it is intended that a plan for some improvement works would be brought before the District at the May meeting**

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

What is the updated position with proposed works to the junction between Glasson and Ballykeeran on the N55 at East Hill?

**Reply: Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) has given approval in principle for a scheme to improve sightlines at the junction of the N55 and the L5457 in the current year. The Council is currently in discussion with the adjacent landowner and is producing the necessary reports for TII to gain final approval and funding to proceed with the scheme.**

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

What has been done to secure Portlick ahead of the summer season to prevent the kind of abuse of the facility experienced in recent years?

**The District Manager and Engineer will meet with local residents and other regular users to identify any practical measures that could be put in place.**

5. Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

When will this District replace the boundary fence at Marine View with a more suitable alternative?

**Reply: The October 2015 District meeting was informed that it would cost approximately €30,000 to replace this fence, and the fence will be replaced as soon as a budget is identified. However, the OPW is considering the provision of a flood defence at this location, so it may be advisable to delay this investment until the detailed design of these defences is available.**

6. Cllr. A O' Rourke:

Should our Civic Centre building in Athlone not have clear, attractive and informative signage to the front of the building like other prominent Local Authority buildings?

**Reply: It is intended to provide replacement information signage in the coming months..**

7. Cllr. J Dolan:

When are the agreed works going to be completed to the Sweep Road Glasson?

**Reply: A contractor has now been procured and it is planned to carry out this work within the next 2 weeks.**

8. Cllr. F Keena:

Is it possible to lower the ground on the field side of the Brawny Square rear walls to try and prevent burglars from entering the resident's properties as indicated at a previous District meeting?

**Reply: It is not practical to lower the ground to a depth which would significantly increase security beside this wall as it may undermine the wall's foundation.**

9. Cllr. F Keena:

Can this Municipal District give a status update on the number of Local Authority houses that have been externally insulated and the number projected for 2016?

**Reply: Works on external wall insulation in the Athlone Municipal District commenced last October and 16 units have been completed to date. A further 64 houses are to be completed in 2016.**

**Correspondence:**

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

- OPW- Acknowledgement of letter to Simon Harris re maintenance programme for River Shannon
- Heather Humpreys – Acknowledgement of letter re maintenance programme for River Shannon – said referred to Simon Harris
- Office of Minister for Finance – noting letter regarding an incentive for refurbishing unused property in town centre
- National Transport Authority – advising of a proposed extension of Bus Service in Athlone to Clonbrusk and Drumraney

**Motions:**a) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this Municipal District arranges a meeting with Coillte to provide nature walks through the forested areas of the District eg. Carn Park which would be very suitable for a scheme of this sort”

**Response: A letter can issue to Coillte inviting them to meet with the Members either in committee or at a full District Meeting.**

It was agreed to write to Coillte inviting them to the District Meeting to address above and to give a presentation on Coilltes ongoing works and future plans in the Athlone Municipal District.

b) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this Municipal District requests Irish Water to upgrade the water system at Shurock, Moate, because of serious faults in recent times, with some households being left without any water.”

**Response: Shurock is the area between Moyvoughly and Moate which suffers from low pressure problems when Ardnafandra Reservoir is being filled or Moate town is being supplied from the Mullingar Low Level Supply. Irish Water is aware of the problem and the matter will be addressed as part of the proposed works at Mullaghmeehan Pumping Station and possibly a booster pumping station at Mount Temple Road, Moate. Works will take some further few months to complete and the inconvenience in the meantime is regretted.**

c) Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

“For this Municipal District to write to the incoming Minister for Finance and the Charities Regulator calling on them to introduce pay ceilings for higher posts across the Charities sector and in particular for CEO posts”

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

It was agreed to write to the Charity Regulator seeking a salary cap of between €70,000- €90,000

d) Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

“For this Municipal District to be given a presentation by our Housing Section on the provision of Traveller accommodation in this District and County, to include all aspects of the service provided by Westmeath County Council relating to Traveller accommodation”

**Response: The Housing section was scheduled to update the Council on the Traveller Accommodation Programme and Fire safety review of Traveller Accommodation at the February meeting which did not take place and this item will now be rescheduled. A presentation can be made to the Athlone Municipal District thereafter, if the Members wish**

e) Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

“For this Municipal District to identify public outdoor areas in the Athlone urban area where free Wi-Fi might be provided by this District to the public in order to enhance the experience of our business and tourism visitors, to serve the community and to facilitate the growing demand for information from a news and educational perspective”.

**Response: The District Manager can prepare a report in conjunction with the District Engineer and the IS section of possible locations and estimated cost and this can be considered at a future district meeting**

f) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District requests that Irish Water provide funding for the replacement of the water main at Fardrum”

**Response: The replacement of the watermain from Ballydonagh to Wash House Turn in Athlone is to commence in March.**

In response to Cllr Dolan question re: timeframe, The District Engineer advised that a Tender process would have to be followed and following this labour period of 6-8 weeks

g) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District conducts a speed survey at Assumption Road to assess the need for additional speed ramps.”

**Response: The District Engineer can arrange for such a survey if the members so wish.**

The Director advised that this Survey would be carried out by the Transportation Section in the next few months.

h) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District requests an updated streetscape plan for Moate.”

**Response: This is a worthy project and is on a list of projects for the Forward Planning Section. However, due to other statutory tasks and as funding for the implementation of the scheme is not currently available, this plan will be progressed in the second half of 2016.**

i) Cllr. M. O’Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District installs a footpath from Clara Road to Hogan Park in Moate in the interest of public safety.”

**Response: There is no funding for a footpath at this location in the current year’s programme. It can be considered in the context of the 2017 programme if the adjacent landowner is willing to allow the adjacent boundary fence to be set back.**

j) Cllr. M. O’Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District asks the Litter Warden to organise the clean up of illegal dumping in Rosemount, Hall Road Moate and Ballymore Road Moate”

**Response: Two clean ups in this general area were carried out in September and February (3 black bags of rubbish were taken away, but no evidence was found to identify any culprits). The District will support community efforts to clean and maintain this area and will prosecute any persons where evidence of dumping can be provided in Court.**

k) Cllr. M. O’Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District introduces a painting grant for street traders in Moate and Athlone in order to enhance the aesthetic appeal of shop fronts.”

**Response: The District Manager is in discussion with the Living Environment group of Destination Athlone and the planning section of the Council on developing a paint colour policy. Under this, building owners would submit a photograph of their building and adjoining buildings to the Council who would formally propose a suitable colour scheme and record same. Consideration could be given to providing part of the Tidy Town budget towards a limited grant scheme.**

The District Manager advised that the Tidy Town’s budget has been used in the past to encourage premises owners to carry out improvements.

l) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That this Municipal District discusses the need to complete the access to the Greenway at Glynwood”

**Response: Some work has been carried out on this access but it will require a substantial volume of additional fill material. A construction project is planned on the R446 in the next three months and this will give rise to suitable material. Thereafter, the access can be completed through a combination of Council and Community involvement.**

m) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That this Municipal District writes to the IDA to request them to increase their land holding in Athlone in the interest of further job creation”

**Response: The IDA has developed a most attractive Business Park in Garrycastle and significant development has taken place there in recent years. There is some undeveloped land within the Business Park but it will be exhausted at some point and the Council will write to the IDA in the terms suggested, if the Members so wish**

All Members agreed to invite IDA to District Meeting to address future plans and expansion

n) Cllr. K. Keena:

“That this Municipal District identifies public infrastructure within its area for naming after those people from the Athlone and surrounding areas who took part in the 1916 Rising.”

**Response: This can be facilitated, if the Members so wish.**

All Members agreed to a period of consultation with the families of those who took part in the 1916 rising.

### A.O.B.

In committee, there was a brief discussion and the following topics were discussed.

- (1) Athlone Regional Sports Centre
- (2) Planning Enforcement

Cllr. Keena suggested that a meeting of the canal subcommittee should be held and it was agreed this will be in advance of Meeting on April 4<sup>th</sup> at 1pm

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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**MAYOR**

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**DATE**