

Minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, February 1st 2016

Attendance:

Mayor: Cllr. T. Farrell

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

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

Votes of Congratulations:

All the Members joined the Mayor in wishing the Marist College well in the Leinster Final.

Minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,
Seconded by Cllr. Dolan and resolved,
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the January Monthly Meeting which was held on January 11th 2016, the in-committee meetings held on October 5th 2015 and on 22nd January 2016"

Review of Speed Limits in 2016

The proposed Review process was circulated together with the timeframe and the Director invited Members to make him aware of any locations they felt should be adjusted.

Members raised the issue of speed limits of 30km in housing estates and the lack of signage that will be in estates not taken in charge. The Director undertook to circulate a list of the later estates and said it might be possible to erect warning signs in these estates. Also the District Engineer advised the Members that any previous agreed changes will be carried out.

The 2016 – 2018 Multi-Annual Restoration Improvement Programme and the 2016 Roads Programme for Athlone Municipal District:

The District Engineer circulated a list and map of the proposed roads and schemes for the Area which the Members welcomed and all agreed that it was very fair. In response to queries, he advised that flood repairs will be done in tandem with the Roads Programme. Cllr. Keena asked why the Baylin Road is closed and he informed him that it is closed for safety reasons while he awaits the results of site investigation carried out. The Director advised the Members that Local Improvement Schemes and Cul de Sacs will be discussed at forthcoming SPC meetings.

It was proposed by Cllr. O'Rourke,
Seconded by Cllr. O'Brien and resolved,
"We hereby adopt the 2016 – 2018 Multi-Annual Restoration Improvement Programme and the Roads Programme for 2016 as circulated at February Meeting"

Presentation from Iarnroid Eireann:

The Mayor and Members welcomed Barry Kenny and Eddie FitzPatrick from Iarnroid Eireann, to the Meeting to give the presentation, which outlined details of the organisation nationally and locally. One of the main concerns of the Members was that passengers have to stand on trains from Athlone to Galway. Mr. Kenny explained that ticket sales on any day cannot indicate the numbers on each train journey, because of open return tickets and free travel but it is their aim not to have anyone standing where possible but that it is not a health and safety issue. In response to queries he stated that the provision of a non-stop journey to Dublin is not likely as the stations in between, need to be serviced; reduction in fuel costs will not filter down to ticket costs but will benefit the customers in other ways where the savings are reinvested; no knowledge of plans for the old railway station; return journeys are incentivised by not being much dearer than single; they work to link with local transport but they compete with Bus Eireann; the timetables and fares are reviewed every year; modifying trains to take more bicycles would be costly and there are no plans to do so. He thanked the Members for their positive comments about the local facilities and staff. The possible acquisition of the Railway Field was mentioned and Mr. FitzPatrick said he would convey their concerns. The Director added that there is a willingness on both sides to sort it out.

The Members thanked Mr. Kenny and Mr. FitzPatrick for their presentation and engagement with them.

Schedule of Municipal District Works 2016:

The schedule was circulated and the District Manager said it was similar to last year and was drawn up after the adoption of the Annual Budget. He recommended its approval.

The Members welcomed it but asked if there is any possibility of the Sweeper working at night to cause less traffic disruption and if the bin situation could be reviewed. The District Engineer said the Budget determines the use of the Sweeper and working at night would be costly but would also cause unwanted noise in estates. The maintenance of bins is costly he added and they attract litter. The whole issue of bins will have to be reviewed.

It was proposed by Cllr. Keena,

Seconded by Cllr. Dolan and resolved,

“We hereby approve of the Schedule of Municipal District Works for Athlone for 2016 as circulated”

Questions:

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

What is the up to date position with the clean up of water courses in the rural areas of Athlone Municipal District?

Reply: Westmeath County Council maintain the River Al and Ballinahown Stream watercourses. These will be cleaned as part of regular maintenance.

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

When do the Council plan to upgrade the road at Carey's Cross, Loughnavalley?

Reply: The Council has sought funding to carry out works on the R391 near Carey's Cross and will undertake the works once the funding is approved.

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

Is there any update on the bye-laws governing the use of the cycleway?

Reply: New signage outlining the appropriate use of the cycleway is on order and should be erected within the next four weeks. Its effectiveness will be assessed and thereafter, the need for bye laws will be considered. Should problems persist, draft bye laws will be prepared and brought before the Members for consideration.

4. Cllr. J. Dolan:

When is the new library in Moate going to be completed?

Reply: Work on the new Moate library is progressing well. Building work is now substantially complete and the fitting out of the library is underway with tenders for shelving and equipment due shortly. It is expected that the library will be open to the public towards the end of Quarter 1 of this year.

5. Cllr. J. Dolan:

How many Hedge Cutting Notices have been issued by this District since the season started?

Reply: No Notices have been issued in the Athlone Municipal District. An advertisement was placed in the local press at the start of the season and some landowners have been contacted informally by the Council. Hedge Cutting Notices will issue where required.

6. Cllr. J. Dolan:

When are the roof repairs going to take place to numbers 1 – 6 The Batteries to eliminate the leaks in these houses?

Reply: Funding has been put in place to carry out roof repairs on these houses. However, it was decided to defer this work until February or March when weather conditions would be more favourable. In the meantime, some temporary repairs were carried out before Christmas.

7. Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

When will the CCTV cameras be in place as agreed to tackle dumping black-spots?

Reply: The Council has now procured a CCTV service provider and will now assess the suitability of sites for CCTV surveillance and will prioritise litter / dumping black spots for surveillance.

8. Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

What is the up to date situation in relation to the next phase of funding for the upgrade of windows and doors?

Reply: Westmeath County Council is one of only three councils which have successfully applied to move to the DOECLG Phase II – Energy Efficiency Programme for Social Housing.

Works in Phase II are in 2 elements;

1) external wall insulation and

2) the upgrade of inefficient windows and doors. (As per DOECLG guidelines only houses with single glazed windows and doors are to be upgraded initially).

90 homes identified for external wall insulation and 19 of those are complete.

240 homes with single glazing have been identified for window replacement and 190 of those are complete at this time.

9. Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

Have Irish Water agreed to fund the rehabilitation of the old water mains in the Fardrum area of Athlone and if so, when will this work be carried out?

Reply: The Council submitted an Asset Needs Brief to Irish Water on 29th January seeking funding to replace 2,800m of watermain from Ballydonagh to Wash House Turn, Athlone. A response is awaited.

10. Cllr. F. Keena:

When will the traffic calming measures be put in place at the Garrycastle Bridge?

Reply: It is intended to have these in place in the next couple of weeks.

11. Cllr. F. Keena:

When will the traffic calming measure be put in place in Montree, Old Coosan Road?

Reply: This will be reinstalled in the next couple of weeks in tandem with those in Garrycastle.

12. Cllr. F. Keena:

Following my motion last year to introduce an un-serviced settlement area in Rosemount and the subsequent reply that it will be given to Forward Planning to progress can this Municipal District give me an update on the matter?

Reply: The issue of un-serviced settlements, including Rosemount, is under consideration by the Planning Section and will be considered by the Planning SPC early in 2016.

13. Cllr. M. O'Brien:

How many litter and dog fouling fines were issued last year in the Athlone Municipal District?

Reply: A total of 19 litter fines were issued in Athlone Municipal District during 2015 but none of these related to dog fouling.

14. Cllr. M. O'Brien:

When will the new Moate Library be open for business?

Reply: Work on the new Moate library is progressing well. Building work is now substantially complete and the fitting out of the library is underway with tenders for shelving and equipment due shortly. It is expected that the library will be open to the public towards the end of Quarter 1 of this year.

15. Cllr. M. O'Brien:

Have the Council plans to purchase or build Local Authority houses in the Moate area this year?

Reply: Under the Social Housing Strategy, the Housing Section is continuing its programme of house acquisitions into 2016. This will include the purchase of suitable houses to meet the needs of identified housing applicants.

Agreement to purchase two dwelling houses in Moate was reached in late 2015. The conveyancing is still in progress and it is hoped that subject to completion of the contracts, these units will be available for allocation by Q2 2016.

Correspondence:

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

- Resolution from Carrick-on-Shannon Municipal District regarding dredging of the Shannon.
- Bus Eireann re the provision of a bus shelter at Wash House Road.
- CFRAMS Management Team re next Consultation Day 11th February 2016.
- Sarah Denby - request to give a presentation to Members on their project “Rewetted and Drained Bogs, CO2 Emissions and Botanical composition”

Motions:a) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this Municipal District carries out all necessary road repairs following the floods, as soon as funding is received from the Government”

Response: An assessment of flood damage is now commencing and will be submitted to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. Works will be scheduled when funding has been approved and will be carried out under the roads programme.

b) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this District and the NRA carry out immediate road works to alleviate the serious flooding of the whole road at the entrance to Tubberclaire GAA.”

Response: The District Engineer will arrange for an investigation of this location and a request for funding will be made to the Transport Infrastructure Ireland for any works deemed appropriate.

c) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That this District carries out a safety review at Ballymore Church car park.

Response: The District Engineer will arrange for the Road Safety Engineer to assess this location and make recommendations

d) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District includes the Ridge Road, Moate between the Ballymore and Rosemount Roads in the 2016 Roads Programme.

Response: This Road has been included for consideration by the Members in the 2016 Roads Programme.

e) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District discusses the implementation of the 2016 housing adaptation grants and how this scheme could be started earlier”

Response: The processing of the private housing grant schemes is managed at Municipal District level in co-operation with the Housing Section. In 2015, the AMD processed 59 grant applications to a value of €476,028. The number of grant applications on hand as of the 26th January 2016 is 57.

Applications are received and processed on a year round basis. On the 15th January, the Housing Section informed the AMD that its initial budget for 2016 is €250,000. It should be noted that a formal allocation from the DECLG has not yet been received.

The Municipal Districts are continuing to process, validate and determine grant applications based on this initial allocation.

f) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District includes the Bolinara Road, Castledaly in this year’s Roads Programme”

Response: This road is proposed for inclusion in the new 3 year Roads Programme

g) Cllr. A. O’Rourke:

“For this Municipal District make a case to Irish Water for immediate investment in Clonbrusk West, Athlone to rehabilitate the old mains water pipes”

Response: The Council submitted an Asset Needs Brief to Irish Water on 22nd January seeking funding to replace 500m of watermain in Clonbrusk West, Athlone. A response is awaited.

Cllr. O’Rourke asked how long the assessment will take and the Director said he would find out and revert back to him, however he added that there is no issue with the quality of the water, just the quantity.

h) Cllr. A. O’Rourke:

“For this Municipal District to consider ring fencing the funding that derives from car parking in the Athlone Municipal District for capital projects in this area from 2017”

Response: The income from car parking in Athlone is included as income for the purposes of the annual budget. Thereafter, it contributes to the cost of providing services and the provisions that are made in the annual budget for capital projects, including those in the Athlone District. The issue of provision for capital projects should continue to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

The Members supported this Motion but the Director advised that this is not such a simple issue. He would have an analysis done on the Budget showing income received and where it is invested and report back to them.

i) Cllr. A. O’Rourke:

“For this Municipal District to install digital road speed display signs on the outskirts of Ballymore Village on the Mullingar side”

Response: The Council is in discussion with TII to provide two digital road displays on the National Secondary roads and thereafter, their effectiveness will be assessed. It is envisaged that they would be deployed in selected locations in due course.

Some Members felt such signs should be used now, but the District Engineer said that they are costly and will not be used until the effectiveness of the two this year have been fully assessed.

j) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“Given the fact that the anti-malarial drug Lariam is to be withdrawn from the Irish market from July 31st that this Municipal District writes to the Department of Defence requesting a compensation scheme be initiated to any soldier who has experienced any adverse psychological effects and negative impacts on their life and wellbeing from taking this anti-malarial drug”

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

It was agreed to write to the Minister for Defence.

k) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“In this the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising, that Athlone Municipal District officially names five currently unnamed roads after the leaders of the 1916 Rising who are currently not recognised in this way in Athlone”

Response: Should the Members support this proposal, it is recommended that a public consultation exercise be undertaken, including a description of the specific roads and the proposed name.

Cllr. Keena felt that a significant number of local people took place in the rising and they should have the roads named after them. Following a discussion it was agreed that the number of locals is very high and there will be a Garden of Remembrance for them.

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,

Seconded by Cllr. Farrell and resolved,

“That the 5 roads listed hereunder be called after 5 leaders of the 1916 Rising not already remembered in the Town:

- Road from Burgess Park Roundabout (bottom of John Broderick St) to Amenity Centre – Ceannt Road
- Road from Burgess Park Roundabout (bottom of John Broderick St) to Ankers Bower Roundabout – MacDiarmada Road
- Road from Clonbrusk Resource Centre (Coosan Rd/Abbey Rd) to Clonbrusk Roundabout (Arcadia Retail Park) – Clarke Road
- Road from Clonbrusk Roundabout (Arcadia Retail Park) to Arcadia Roundabout (Coosan Point Rd) – MacDonagh Road
- Road from Clonbrusk Roundabout (Arcadia Retail Park) to Roundabout at New 2 Mile (adjacent to SDS) – Plunkett Road

The Director advised that these will now be advertised and he will report back to the April Meeting.

l) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“In light of the recent flooding, that Athlone Municipal District writes to the Government calling for the initiation of a river maintenance programme of the Shannon”

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

It was agreed to write a letter to the Junior Minister with responsibility for the Shannon and to the relevant Minister

m) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That Athlone Municipal District discusses the need to provide a public mains sewer along the Bullet Road.

Response: Two separate group sewerage schemes on the Bullet Road were proposed in the past but did not advance to construction. Recent contact with the Groups indicated that they were no longer interested in advancing the Schemes. There are no proposals to provide a public sewer on the Bullet Road.

n) Cllr. F. Keena:

“That Athlone Municipal District provides money in the 2016 roads and footpath programme to repair footpaths in Mayfield Grove”

Response: Funding for the repair of footpaths in this estate was allocated over the last 2 years and the worst sections have been replaced.

o) Cllr. K. Keena:

“That Athlone Municipal District discusses the proposal by Minister Aodhan O’Riordan to introduce injection rooms into Ireland and also to decriminalise the use of drugs.

Response: No response.

Clr. Keena outlined particular concerns and it was agreed that he would forward these to the District Administrator for letter to issue

p) Cllr. M. O’Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District makes safe the trees on the side of the road in the Killinahinch/Ballinderry area on the Rosemount Road in Moate”

Response: These trees are the responsibility of the individual landowners in question. If there are specific concerns, the Council can carry out an inspection and notify the landowner accordingly.

q) Cllr. M. O’Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District appoints an additional litter warden to the Moate/Athlone area in order to address the ongoing problem of illegal dumping and dog fouling”

Response: The Athlone Municipal District Community Warden is empowered to act as Litter Warden for the entire District, including Moate. In 2015, 171 complaints were received in the

Athlone Municipal District and all of these were inspected and investigated. Any particular areas of concern should be brought to the attention of the Warden either directly, or through the District Administrator.

A.O.B.

The Mayor distributed the Centenary Programme to the Members.

All the Members joined in his good wishes to Cllr.s Hogan and Moran in the upcoming Election.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MAYOR

DATE