

Minutes of Athlone Municipal District Meeting which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, 7th December 2015

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
Anne McNamara, Assistant Staff Officer

Suspension of Standing Orders:

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell,
Seconded by Cllr. Dolan and resolved,
"We hereby suspend Standing Orders to discuss the current weather conditions and the level of the Shannon"

The Director advised the Members that as a result of the extreme rainfall and Storm Desmond, the level of the Shannon is very high and ESB predictions are not good. The level in 2009 reached 39.67 and it is predicted that the level will reach 39.57 by Saturday 12th December. The Emergency Flood Committee has met and he outlined the measures being put in place and that the Council will continue to co-ordinate all the agencies.

While the Members acknowledged all the measures being undertaken, they expressed disappointment that no infrastructure had been put in place since 2009. They stressed the importance of letting people know of the help and supports that are there for them. The Director noted all they said but added that minor works had been carried out after 2009 but that no significant flood defence schemes can be carried out until the OPW have completed the CFRAM Study and decisions are taken on spending. With regard to the current situation, he said that there will be daily updates and the various agencies will continue to work closely together to do everything possible to assist those in need.

Votes of Thanks/Congratulations:

All the Members joined in the Mayor's congratulations to the Milltown Ladies Team on winning the All Ireland Intermediate Championship and with Cllr. Hogan's congratulations to Colm Moriarty on his recent golf success.

Minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr. Moran,
Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the November Monthly Meeting and the in-committee Meeting, both held on November 2nd 2015.

Matters Arising:

The District Engineer confirmed for Cllr. O'Rourke that the lights at Ballymore Church will be assessed in early 2016. He informed Cllr. Hogan that he will follow up with TII about improving the roundabout at The Cova.

Cllr. Hogan was advised that Joe Ruane, HSE will meet in committee with the Members at some time in December but Cllr. Hogan said that was not acceptable to him. The Members want Mr. Ruane to attend a public meeting to answer their questions on the future of St. Vincent's Hospital and as HSE Services Manager, they felt he should attend. The Director agreed to speak with Mr. Ruane again to arrange this.

Inland Waterways Association of Ireland:

The Mayor welcomed to the Meeting, Brian Corcoran and a representative group from the Athlone Branch of the IWAI. Mr. Corcoran gave a presentation in which he outlined the history, objectives, membership, activities and achievements of the Athlone Branch and their current concerns about the cycleway and its effect on the Marina and the possible ways the Council could help them. Another concern was the existence of permanent or semi permanent mooring at the Marina, reducing the number of places available for visitors and the Members agreed to review this practice.

The Members thanked him and his colleagues for the presentation, acknowledged the good work done by their voluntary body and agreed to support them with the Boat Rally in whatever way they could.

Update on National Cycleway Project from Dublin to Galway:

The Director advised the Members that the Mullingar to Athlone stretch is complete and open, but with some signage, seating, fencing and placing of top soil to be completed, for which a further grant has been received. It is now incumbent on the Council to build on this infrastructure linking it to other attractions etc.

The Part 8 on the stretch from Garrycastle to the Shannon will go before the full Council Meeting on December 14th next. He showed the Members an image of the proposed design of the new bridge and said that specialist consultants will be engaged to assess its impact on the Marina and to propose what is best way to rearrange and improve. He added that the Minister for Transport has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the overall cycleway project, that the section east of Westmeath to Maynooth is approved for construction and the Athlone to Galway section has been paused to allow the respective Councils to re-engage with farmers in Galway and Roscommon in an attempt to deal with various issues that have been identified. The Members welcomed the update and the progress being made. Following questions the Director outlined the various timeframes involved, that compensation is normally payable where land is acquired and that some trees will be lost in the vicinity of the ramps at the Promenade. However, any trees that are removed will be replaced. He added that any extension to the town CCTV network is a matter for the Department of Justice.

Part 8 Planning process for the National Cycleway from Garrycastle to the Marina:

The Report of the Chief Executive on this Part 8 was circulated to the Members and they were informed that it would go before the full Council on December 14th 2015.

Free parking for Christmas:

The Members had previously proposed that two Saturdays before Christmas should have free parking.

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,
 Seconded by Cllr. O'Rourke and resolved,
 "We hereby agree that Saturday 12th December and Saturday 19th December 2015 be free parking days in Council car-parks in Athlone"

The Mayor pointed out that Mullingar is providing 5 free parking days before Christmas, but he suggested that Athlone provide further days in the New Year, January or February, to help boost trade at a quieter time of year. This was agreed by all the Members.

Recommendations from the Parking sub-Committee:

A Report from the sub-committee was circulated and the Members agreed with the recommendations made. They just stressed that consultation with the people of St. Patrick's Tce was essential.

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,
 Seconded by Cllr. Dolan and resolved,
 "We hereby approve of the recommendation of the parking sub-committee as set out below:

1. Provide business parking permits on a trial basis to in Connaught Street and O'Connell Street car parks (10 permits initially at an annual cost of €360).
2. Provide 3 additional car parking spaces on Mardyke St.
3. Move the loading bay at Pearse Street from outside Murphy's Law Pub to coincide with the bus stop (this provides two additional spaces).
4. Carry out further consultation in relation to the provision of 6 paid car parking spaces to the side of St. Patricks Terrace.
5. Provide a loading bay on Castlemaine Street, near Behan's / Croghan's.
6. Provide a combined loading bay/taxi rank in front of Sean's Bar in lieu of 2 car parking spaces.

The proposed extension of the One-Way System on the Westside:

The District Engineer circulated the proposals advertised. Only one submission was received by the due date but since then, a group of concerned residents and business people of the area have approached him about the proposals. They are holding a meeting to discuss them and asked if he could defer the decision until they got back to him. As it was not a statutory procedure the Members agreed to defer the matter until the February Meeting.

Naming of the Roundabouts:

The District Engineer had circulated a map showing the 12 main roundabouts in the town, with the proposed names based on local townlands and landmarks. Following a discussion the Members agreed to the proposed names, but with the proviso that they could be re-visited if there were serious complaints from any particular area.

It was proposed by Cllr. Moran,
 Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,
 "We hereby approve of the names of the 12 main roundabouts in the Town as shown on the map circulated at this Meeting"

Re-scheduling of January District Meeting:

It was unanimously agreed to hold the January Monthly Meeting of Athlone Municipal District on Monday 11th January 2016 at 2pm.

A.O.B.

The Mayor appealed to the public not to close up water cuts opened by the Council. All supported this, agreeing that it was short sighted and dangerous. He thanked the Council Staff for all the work they did over the weekend.

He reminded the Members of the Address of Recognition for the achievements of the Athlone Team in this year's European Peoples Festival, taking place on Thursday evening at 5.30pm.

Christmas Greetings:

The Mayor, Members and Executive wished a Happy Christmas to the Defence Forces, the Emergency Services and the Gardaí who will be working over the Christmas and their families and in particular to those serving overseas. The Mayor wished his Colleagues, the Executive and Staff and the Press a very Happy Christmas and invited all to the Switching on of the Christmas Lights at 5pm in McCormack Square.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MAYOR

DATE