

Minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Special Meeting which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 4.15 p.m. on Thursday, 15th September 2016

Attendance:

Mayor: Cllr. J. Dolan

Members: Cllrs. T. Farrell, P. Hogan, A. McManus, M. O'Brien, F Keena and A. O'Rourke

Officers: Barry Kehoe, Director of Services
Pat Keating, District Manager

Church Street Enhancement:

Mayor John Dolan welcomed Consultants Nicholas de Jonge and Andrew Archer who made a presentation on the enhancement project. They reviewed the four options being, continued 2 way, one way east, one way west and pedestrianisation, against the objectives and constraints of the scheme. They recommended proceeding with a one way westbound proposal.

The Mayor thanked them for the presentation and noted that we require a main street to be proud of with the €3M investment from the European Regional Development Fund (50%) and Westmeath County Council (50%). He noted that future enhancement works when funds become available will be targeted at Irishtown and Market Place. He proposed that Part VIII be commenced for enhancement works with oneway westbound traffic and noted that this will allow for all submissions to be considered.

The Director of Services stated that Athlone is the main town in the Midlands across all sectors including retail, business, tourism and education; the Main Street must reflect and build on this. It is an long standing ambition of the town and the European Regional Development Fund presents the opportunity.

The consultants were given a clean slate to assess and advise the Council how best to enhance Church Street; they conducted a detailed analysis of all traffic data and this can be made available. Phase II works will continue this enhancement from Griffith Street to John Broderick Street.

The Executive are now seeking the Members support to proceed to Part VIII for one way Westbound; this will include drawings and revamped signage and identified necessary road improvements. The Part VIII process invites all submissions and all will be considered and reported on. The report will be forwarded to Westmeath County Council for approval or amendment.

Cllr. O'Rourke welcomed the funding being made available and the detailed traffic data and presentation; he supported the detailed consultation process, the €3M investment, the revitalisation impact on high vacancy rates and the increased tourism attraction; he noted that the council procure expertise to guide decision making. He suggested that professional communications resources should be engaged during the construction stages.

Cllr Farrell noted the importance of enhancing Church St to support retail and that all submissions will be considered

Cllr Hogan pointed out the danger of misinformation in the process and clarified the ongoing consultation provision under s179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The focus must be on access for all users of church Street and a €3M investment must provide wider footpaths to enhance the Street. This is another significant, planned investment in the Town and the Council has always supported these necessary projects. Communication is critical at the construction stage.

Cllr. O'Brien welcomed the presentation; he stated that the Main St. is not fit for purpose, he welcome the investment and agrees that communications are critical.

Cllr Keena welcomed the professional presentation and the consultation carried out to date. He supported the recommendation. Communications will be very important to advise and guide the public during and in the months after completion; cyclists must also be accommodated.

Cllr. McManus welcomed the proposal as a positive contribution to the development of the Town Centre; all concerns should be addressed through the Part VIII process

The Director thanked the Members for their contribution and support for the project and:

- agreed that communications is critical;
- the Chief Executive Report on the Part VIII should be with the Council by or in February;
- all submissions will be addressed in the report

The Mayor thanked the Members for their unanimous support for the commencement of Part VIII.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MAYOR

DATE