

**Minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup> 2016**

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**Attendance:**

Mayor: Cllr. J. Dolan

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

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

**Votes of Sympathy:**

All the Members wished to be associated with expressions of sympathy to the following:  
The McManus Family on the death of Dermot, The Ross Family on the death of Tim, the Cullen Family on the death of Joseph & The Carey/Donohoe Family in Tyrellspass on the death of Corporal Gavin.

**Minutes:**

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell,  
Seconded by Cllr. O'Brien and resolved,  
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the July Monthly Meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2016 as amended (to include that the members had requested that the issue of staffing review be placed on the September Agenda).

**Minutes:**

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,  
Seconded by Cllr. McManus and resolved,  
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the In-Committee Meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2016"

**Minutes:**

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,  
Seconded by Cllr. McManus and resolved,  
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the In-Committee Meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2016"

**Matters Arising:**

In response to his query, Cllr. Hogan was advised that the minutes of the July Meeting would be amended to include his proposal of the staffing issue in Athlone Municipal District to be placed on the September Agenda. The Director of Services advised that a report on service delivery would be prepared for and be an item on the October Meeting. All Members welcomed this review.

Tourist Office (Question 12 was taken with this) - The Members requested that Fáilte Ireland would be invited to meet with them in relation to the issue of the Tourist Office.

The Members also requested that the Railway Field Link Road be placed on the October Agenda. The Members expressed frustration at the length of time this project is taking and seemingly making no progress.

**Presentation on Church Street Enhancement**

The Mayor proposed that this item be deferred to a Special Meeting this Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2016 at 4.15pm in Athlone Civic Centre and the members agreed.

**Consider Amending Standing Orders to start monthly District Meetings at 3pm:**

It was proposed by Cllr Dolan and all Members agreed.

### **Design Plans:**

The Design plans for (a) Baylough Safety Improvement Works, (b) Golden Island/Carrick O'Brien Junction Safety Improvement Works & (c) Moate Courthouse Plaza Extension were circulated to the Members. The Members noted and welcomed the plans

### **Free Carparking in Public Car Parks on Saturday October 1<sup>st</sup> 2016**

It was proposed by Cllr. Keena, Seconded by Cllr. McManus and resolved,

"That we hereby approve Free Parking in the public car parks on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016"

The Members requested that it should be considered to offer free parking for 3-4 days around the Christmas. The Director of Services advised that this would have a budgetary impact. Cllr Hogan requested that this would be placed on the Agenda for October.

### **Request for Civic Honour for ONE on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2016**

The District Manager advised that this request came from National Ex Service Men and had been considered by the Civic Hours subcommittee who recommend it be forwarded to the CPG with a recommendation that an Address be provided on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September. All Members supported this request.

### **Questions:**

#### **1. Cllr. T. Farrell**

Following the Safety Review in Glasson Village, when will additional safety measures be implemented?

**Reply: A review of safety in Glasson was undertaken in consultation with TII and driver feedback signs are to be erected on the southbound approach to the village in the current year.**

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

When will the footpaths in the Willow Park area be repaired, particularly Willow View?

**Reply: No funding was allocated for footpaths in Willow Park in the current year. It will be a matter for the Members to consider these for funding in the context of the 2017 Roads programme.**

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

Will Athlone Municipal District outline what flood relief projects it intends to deliver in 2016 with the monies funded by the O.P.W.?

**Reply: Two Minor Works Schemes have been allocated funding for implementation in 2016. These are:**

**a. Installation of a non return valve at the end of Griffith Street to reduce the inflow of flood water onto the Strand at this location.**

**b. A demountable flood barrier and adjustments to the drainage system at Canal Walk to improve the effectiveness of the flood response at this location. In particular, it is intended that this barrier would keep the access road to Canal Walk open through a severe flood event.**

**The total cost of the above schemes is approximately €105,000, 10% of which must be funded by Westmeath County Council.**

#### **4. Cllr.A.McManus:**

When will the new watermain to Tullywood be completed and residents fully connected to it?

**Reply: The watermains in the Tullywood area are connected to the new watermain along the R466 the majority of residents have been connected. The remaining residents will be connected in the next two weeks.**

#### **5. Cllr.A.McManus:**

When is it envisaged the Main Drainage Scheme will start in Athlone?

**Reply: The Contract for the interim upgrade works at Athlone Wastewater Treatment Plant is scheduled for signing this month and it is expected that work on the project will commence in October.**

**Detailed design and planning of the foul sewer improvement works is ongoing and works are scheduled to be on site in early 2018.**

#### **6. Cllr. A.O'Rourke:**

How does Athlone compare to Mullingar in relation to the number of personnel in the following roles:

Traffic Wardens, Litter Wardens and Community Wardens

**Reply: Athlone Municipal District has one Traffic/Litter Warden and one Community Warden. Mullingar Municipal District has three Traffic Wardens and two Community Wardens.**

Supp Q : Why Has Mullingar more personnel?

Reply: Mullingar have a larger area, all parking in Mullingar is public owned whereas the two major car parks in Athlone are privately owned, ie Golden Island & Athlone Town Centre, Athlone have less parking to be monitored. The Director of Services advised that this will be included in the service delivery report to the October meeting.

7. Cllr. A. O' Rourke:

Why was weed spraying and ongoing weed control so poor this season?

**Reply: There were some issues with the Contractor who won the contract on foot of a public tender but the Council believe these have now been resolved.**

Supp Q: Why is the Council using the same contractor?

Reply: Contractor is approved through the Procurement Procedure which will be due for tender next year.

8. Cllr.A.O Rourke:

Can a small number of bollards be put along the path where the railing was removed at the Luan Gallery to give pedestrians more protection?

**Reply: This area will be assessed and if bollards are required, these will be installed. However, this is a town centre location where traffic should be cognisant of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users and such measures should not be required.**

9. Cllr.F. Keena:

Can Athlone Municipal District give an update on the status of my previous motion to provide a safe footpath from Tubberclair National School towards Tubberclair Church?

**Reply: It was agreed at the previous meeting that the Council would support any local initiative to set back the existing stone wall by supplying materials. To date no local group has progressed the proposal.**

Supp Q: Can Council consider provision of footpath?

Reply: The Director of Services advised that this would cost a significant amount of money and a budget would have to be set aside in the case of a CPO.

10. Cllr.F.Keena:

Can Athlone Municipal District explain the delay in bringing forward a map of the proposed designated site on Brawney Road for Athlone Tennis Club?

**Reply: The delay has been caused by a review of all of the lands in Brawney, that is being undertaken in the context of the Housing Strategy and the need for housing development, both private and public in Athlone. It is expected that a map will issue to the Tennis Club for their consideration in the next month and a Section 183 will be brought before the Members thereafter.**

11. Cllr.F.Keena:

Can Athlone Municipal District present for consideration at our September 2016 meeting the submissions that were received from families of their loved ones who served during the 1916 Rising in regard to identifying their wishes of publically remembering them?

**Reply: A single submission was received to this notice and related to the Elliot Sisters for whom a plaque was erected in May. An item will be included on the Agenda for the next Municipal District Meeting.**

12. Cllr.J.Dolan:

Can we have an update on the progress with the Tourist Office relocation?

**Reply: A meeting has taken place with Failte Ireland regarding this issue and Failte Ireland expressed the view that they are satisfied with the current location of the Office.**

13. Cllr.J.Dolan:

What funding is left for housing improvement and adaptation grants?

**Reply: Over €470,000 has been spent on Housing Grants in the Athlone Municipal District in 2016 and a balance of €53,000 remains.**

Supp Q: Are there any further allocations?

Reply: The Director will advise if there will be an additional allocation following the Management Team meeting.

14. Cllr.J.Dolan:

When are the gullies in The Strand area going to be cleared and jetted?

**Reply: The gullies at The Strand were cleared after the surfacing works were completed earlier this year.**

Supp Q: Can The District Engineer call to look at this area again?

Reply: Yes

15. Cllr.M.O'Brien:

What is the current position regarding regional status for the L5403 and the re-marking of this road in Castledaly?

**Reply: The re-designation of this road as the R444 is a Ministerial function by means of Statutory Instrument. It was indicated to the Council that this was to happen; however we have received no formal notification to date.**

Supp Q: Can The Council write to the Department seeking update?

Reply: The Council will write to the Department seeking update

16. Cllr.M.O'Brien:

What is the current legal position and who's responsibility is it to eradicate the spread of the poisonous plant ragwort?

**Reply: Under the Noxious Weeds Act, 1936, it is an offence not to prevent the growth and spread of noxious weeds. Owners and occupiers of land must ensure that they abide by the provisions in the act. Noxious weeds, which must be controlled, are ragwort, thistle, dock and wild oat. Under the Act, powers for the control of noxious weeds are vested in the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine**

17. Cllr.M.O'Brien:

What is the current position regarding the provision of an additional litter / community warden for the Athlone Municipal District?

**Reply: There is no provision for employing an additional Litter Warden and the Athlone Municipal District Community Warden is empowered to act as Litter Warden for the entire District, including Moate. Blackspot areas identified in Moate are being monitored by the Community Warden.**

18. Cllr.P.Hogan:

When will the appropriate speed signs be erected in Ballinahown village?

**Reply: The District Engineer will arrange an inspection if the speed limit signs on each approach to the village and arrange replacement of any missing signs**

19. Cllr.P.Hogan:

What is the timeframe for the erection and repair of fencing along the Greenway from Garrycastle to the Ballymahon Road?

**Reply: Work on this section of greenway has just commenced and will be completed before the end of the year.?**

Supp Q: Can a detailed Report be prepared?

Reply: Detailed Report will be prepared for the October meeting

20. Cllr.P.Hogan

What provision has been made to maintain the work previously undertaken by Gateway staff?

**Reply: Under the Gateway Scheme the participants could only undertake work complementary to the core work of the Council but not replacing any existing work already undertaken by the Council. The works undertaken were largely environmental in nature. There are no plans to continue some of these works in the future because the District Office does not have the resources to do so.**

Supp Q: Can a detailed Review be prepared?

Reply: This can be considered in the Service Delivery report

### **Correspondence:**

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

- Reply from Tanaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality regarding Community CCTV. The Minister is currently developing proposals to provide for investment in CCTV Systems.  
Also, advised that there is provision for CCTV funding from the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 Spoke with WCDL and Community Section of WCC and there is no such programme currently available in the County for CCTV in Rural Areas from either of those two source's
- Reply from the Dept of Finance, acknowledges AMD Correspondence regarding the rising cost of insurance.
- Reply from the Minister of Education and Skill's, to AMD correspondence concerning ASD Unit at Drumraney National School. He National Council for Special Education has advised the Department that they have not established the need for a new special class in the area referred to.
- Acknowledgement from Tanaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality regarding Community CCTV
- Acknowledgement from Minister of Education and Skills Richard Bruton T.D. regarding AMD letter concerning funding for a new building for Coosan National School.
- Reply from the Minister of Finance to AMD correspondence concerning property repossession's cases,
- Reply from IDA Ireland to AMD query concerning the IDA's Future plans and expansions for the Midlands. The response states that IDA Ireland will address this matter when presenting to Westmeath County Council later in the year.
- Letter from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform indicating that the AMD correspondence regarding capping of salaries in the charity sector has been referred to the Tanaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality.
- Confirmation from the Office of Tanaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality that this correspondence has been received.

The Members requested copies of all correspondance and requested that an invitation be sent to the IDA for a meeting with the Members and also invite the Galway Office for an update on Monksland. Cllr Keena requested that another letter be sent to the Department of Defence, re: Opening of Museum for Public.

### **Motions:**

a) Cllr. T. Farrell:

"That online payment facilities should be made available for people for all services provided in Athlone eg. traffic fines."

**Response: The traffic fine technology adopted in Athlone differs from Mullingar and both systems have become obsolete.**

**This provision of an online system in Athlone is dependent on:**

- **The implementation of a new traffic fines system which includes new hand-helds and new back-office software**
- **The availability of a new centralised online payments facility which is due to be operational in Q4 2016**

**Other online payment systems are in place for rates, rents and loans.**

All the Members agreed with Cllr. Farrell. The Director of Services hopes that this would be operational by the end of the year.

b) Cllr. T. Farrell:

"That the road from the crossroads in Rosemont Village to beyond the National School be tarred."

**Response: No funding was allocated for this road in the current 3 Year Roads Programme 2016-2018. It can be inspected and, if appropriate, considered for works should the Department of Transport provide additional funding.**

Cllr Farrell requested that this would be allocated in next year budget, all Members agreed.

c) Cllr. T. Farrell:

“That Athlone Municipal District writes to the Minister for Finance to seek an update on the Insurance Task Force set up within his Department, together with communicating the concern over the Insurance Sector refusing to insure older vehicles, especially for young drivers.

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

It was agreed to send a letter.

d) Cllr. A. McManus/M O'Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District removes the tree stumps and implements footpath improvements at Mayfield Grove, Athlone.”

**Response: Funding for the repair of footpaths in this estate was allocated over the last two years and the worst sections have been replaced. No funding was allocated for footpaths in Mayfield Grove in the current year. It will be a matter for the Members to consider these for funding in the context of the 2017 Roads programme. The tree stumps can be removed as part of any planned works.**

e) Cllr. A McManus:

“That this Municipal District provides funding to replace the timber fences that are broken down at the back of Ashdale.”

**Response: Tenants are responsible for the upkeep of the boundary fences to their homes in accordance with the terms of their Tenancy Agreement.**

f) Cllr. A. McManus:

“That this Municipal District ensures as part of the extension of the cycleway, that fencing at Garrycastle is provided.”

**Response: The current funding allocation to extend the cycleway from Garrycastle to the White Gates does not include for the above fence, which it is estimated would cost in the order of €40,000. The Council will continue to seek a funding source for this fence and in the meantime, the location of the fence should be agreed with local residents.**

g) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

“That Athlone Municipal District uses some of the funds available through the rural renewal funding to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the main thoroughfare in Moate town”

**Response: The Urban and Village Renewal Scheme was announced by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and applications must be made by the end of September. The scheme requires community involvement and that Health Checks are carried out. Moate will be considered for funding under this scheme.**

The Director of Services advised that there was €380,000 funding available and there would be a considerable amount of work involved in preparing a plan. Cllr Farrell requested that some of the funds to be allocated towards other villages, ie Streamstown and Rosemount.

h) Cllr. M. O'Brien:

“The Athlone Municipal District reduces the speed limit to (50kph) in Mount Temple village at the approach to the entrance of Loch Luatha housing estate from the Glasson side.”

**Response: This is being considered within the context of the current countywide Speed Limit review.**

All Members supported this. The Director of Services advised that a review would be brought before the Members by the end of the year.

i) Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

“For Westmeath County Council and this Municipal District to carry out the necessary repair work to deal with the ongoing flooding problem at times of heavy rain in Ardbrake Park, Athlone.”

**Response: The Council has recently completed investigations into the cause of the flooding and has identified a section of surface water sewer that requires replacement. The District Engineer is**

**currently procuring a contractor and identifying funding for the works and it is expected that works will be undertaken before winter.**

Cllr O'Rourke thanked the District Engineer.

j) Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

"For this Municipal District to seek a meeting with Minister Shane Ross and the CIE Chairman with a view to getting a firsthand account of where the "Railway Field" negotiations are at this time and to establish what we need to do to finalise the deal"

**Response: The Council has been in correspondence with CIE regarding the lands for this road over a protracted period and has attempted to resolve all of the queries raised by the Company. A further meeting is scheduled for late September and an update will be provided at the October District Meeting. It is recommended that a decision on the motion be deferred until after this meeting.**

Cllr Dolan supported Cllr O'Rourke proposal to write to the Minister and request a meeting.

The Director of Services advised that he would have a written report to Members at the October Meeting

k) Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

"For Westmeath County Council to review safety at the new Altown (Garrycastle) Roundabout with a view to slowing traffic approaching the Roundabout coming from AIT direction."

**Response: The District Engineer will review this location to assess how motorists approaching the roundabout from the AIT side can be better informed of the need to give way.**

l) Cllr. F. Keena:

"That Athlone Municipal District opens discussions with Offaly County Council to jointly develop and fund a spur of the greenway from Athlone to Clonmacnoise using Athlone as the hub in providing on street bike rentals. The old Pilgrims Route could be one option for consideration"

**Response: While the Executive would be supportive of the substance of this motion, the Council does not have the capacity to progress such route at the present time. All available resources are engaged in the National Cycleway project and a link from the Mullingar Athlone line to Kilbeggan and the Grand Canal in County Offaly. Resources for the route proposed may become available in 2017.**

All the Members supported Cllr. Keena in writing to Offaly County Council and requested a meeting to discuss same and proposed this as an item on future Agenda. The Director advised that he would raise the issue in future discussions with Offaly County Council.

m) Cllr. F. Keena:

"That Athlone Municipal District agrees to provide 20% funding from code F030204 (Recreation & Amenity) to the Glasson / Tubberclair Playground Group to support them provide a playground in Tubberclair pending planning permission"

**Response: There are currently 34 playgrounds in Westmeath, including 9 in Athlone. In recent years playgrounds have been provided through community led proposals with significant funding from Leader and with Council support in line with current playground policy.**

**With the approval of the Members, the proposal in the Motion can be considered and progressed in conjunction with the Glasson / Tubberclair Playground Group and the LCDC.**

n) Cllr. F. Keena:

"That Athlone Municipal District draw up a proposed plan to develop the No. 1 on the Westside of Athlone into a public amenity park in consultations with local residents.

**Response: These lands are identified under the Waterfront Strategy as a new active recreational zone and development must be considered in the context of prioritisation and available funding for capital projects.**

All Members supported this. The Director of Services supported this but could not give a timeframe and will consult with Forward Planning to draw up a brief.

o) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District provides a 2 hour restricted parking area in the centre of Moate on a trial basis”.

**Response: The Executive is supportive of this proposal as it will release parking in the centre of Moate for those who want to transact business or visit the town and will encourage long stay parkers such as employees or others who park all day to use more peripheral parking facilities. It can be progressed with the approval of the Members.**

The Director of Services advised that bye-laws would be required and that Public Consultation would follow; he agreed to bring a map to the October meeting for discussion.

p) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District requests that Westmeath County Council CPO the O’Neill’s Pub site”.

**Response: This site contains two properties that were demolished following serious fire damage a number of years ago. An assessment of the strategic value of this site will be undertaken by the**

**Council and its acquisition can then be considered in the context of other priorities and available capital funding**

It was proposed by Cllr Dolan, seconded by Cllr Keena.

The Director of Services advised that the Local Authority would have to decide what it wanted to do with the site before seeking purchase and what liabilities the Council may take on in relation to adjoining properties and whether its of strategic value, Council will carry out an assessment as soon as possible.

q) Cllr. J. Dolan:

“That this Municipal District replaces the pedestrian lights in Ballinahown with traffic lights”

**Response: Zebra type crossings are normally suitable for locations with low pedestrian volumes. However, Transportation will review the type of crossing control at this location in conjunction with the TII Safety Inspector and in the response**

r) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That Athlone Municipal District commits to hosting the European People's Festival by 2023”.

**Response: The District Manager will bring a report on this programme and the implications for hosting same in Athlone to the November meeting for the consideration of the Members.**

Cllr Hogan asked can the Council start making provision in annual budgets in 2017; Cllr Dolan supported this. The Director of Services advised this will incur significant expenditure and an update will be given at the November Meeting.

s) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That Athlone Municipal District prunes dangerous trees on the boundary of Ashley Crescent and Sarsfield Square”

**Response: The Council will inspect the trees in question and if they are deemed to be a hazard, appropriate Notices will be served.**

t) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That Athlone Municipal District informs the Members what is owed to suppliers for Municipal works in the Athlone area and why these payments are not being paid in a reasonable timeframe.

**Response: As of the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, there were 373 invoices totalling €1.22m to be paid in Athlone Municipal District. The volume of invoices has increased in 2016 due to flood response activities and the subsequent extensive road repair programme. It should be noted that some payments may be delayed due to queries on invoices or delivery dockets, but every effort is made to resolve these and to issue payment as soon as possible.**

Clr. Hogan expressed concern at the late payments and was supported by Clr Dolan. The Director of Services advised that €929,000 of the above amount related to September Invoices but expressed



apologies to persons owed monies. He undertook to address this and to update the Members at the October Meeting.

**A.O.B.**

The Mayor advised the Members that Athlone Sub Aqua had invited them to visit their base after the October Meeting.

Cllr Keena asked would a Budgetary Draft be available for the October Meeting

Further to Cllr Farrell query on additional road markings in Willow Park to help with the parking chaos following the return of students, the District Engineer advised that all the Residents involved should submit a plan to him.

Cllr Mc Manus asked about pedestrian crossing, the Director advised this could form a submission to the Part 8 Housing proposal

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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**MAYOR**

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**DATE**