

Minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 3.00 p.m. on Monday 12th June 2017.

Attendance:

Mayor: Cllr. A. O'Rourke

Members: Cllr. T. Farrell, Cllr P. Hogan, Cllr. F. Keena, Cllr.A. McManus,
Cllr. M. O'Brien and Cllr J. Dolan

Officers: Barry Kehoe, Director of Services
Pat Keating, District Manager
Pat Nally, District Engineer
Ciaran Jordan, Senior Executive Engineer, Environment
Frank Dolan A/District Administrator
Eilish Reilly, Staff Officer

Votes of Congratulation / sympathy

Cllr A. O'Rourke Mayor expressed sympathy to Cllr P. Hogan on the death of his grandfather Mr. Arthur Earle and his partner's father Mr. Michael Bolger. He also expressed sympathy to the Greene family on the death of May Greene who was 105.

All the members wished to be associated with the expressions of sympathy.

It was agreed by the members that going forward expressions of congratulations and sympathy would be submitted by the members in advance of meetings.

Cllr Hogan thanked all the members and staff for their expressions of sympathy.

Cllr Frankie Keena congratulated Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran on his appointment as Junior Minister. All the members wished to be associated with this.

Cllr Paul Hogan wished to congratulate Mr. Anthony Greene, staff member of the Athlone Fire Brigade and Ms. Lorraine Derwin staff member of Westmeath County Council on their recent marriage.

Minutes

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrell Seconded by Cllr. O'Brien and resolved,

"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the April Monthly Meeting which was held on the 2nd May, 2017.

Matters Arising:

Cllr Tom Farrell asked when the Tourism Officer would be taking up the post. Mr. Barry Kehoe Director of Services advised that The Tourist Officer would be starting on 20th June.

To Consider and approve draft Athlone Municipal District Litter Management Plan

Mr. Ciaran Jordan Senior Executive Engineer gave a presentation on the Draft Litter Management Plan to the members. He advised the members that there was two submissions received one from An Garda Síochana and one from a member of the public. He outlined a

summary of the submissions that were made and outlined some of the concerns raised in relation to illegal dumping and dog fouling. He highlighted items such as education and awareness, community involvement and also the use of smart technology and additional underground bring banks. Cllr P. Hogan as Chair of the Environment SPC welcomed the plan and thanked the people who made submissions. He stated that it was great to see dog fouling taken into consideration and additional underground bring banks. He advised that the use of smart technology was one of the key areas that the current SPC were looking at. Cllr Hogan formally proposed the adoption of the plan and this was seconded by Cllr John Dolan. Cllr Dolan welcomed the presentation and the submissions made. He stated that it was a difficult job considering the litter problem ongoing. He asked if it was possible to visit houses and ask the householder to provide receipt evidence of waste disposal or if you have a dog licence how you dispose of your dog waste. He stated that the dog fouling initiative in Moate was very positive. Cllr O'Brien welcomed the plan and expressed his delight at seeing some of the measures he had put forward included. He agreed that the dog fouling initiative in Moate was a great success and hoped to see it rolled out elsewhere especially in Athlone. He advised that it was also a great opportunity to promote the free phone number by having it printed on Council Vehicles. Cllr Tom Farrell welcomed the presentation. He expressed concern in relation to dogs on the cycleway and a need to establish breeds of dogs allowed and to have signs erected accordingly. Cllr McManus expressed her delight at the report and asked when the clothes bank at the Fairgreen was being moved. Cllr Keena thanked Mr. Jordan for his presentation and asked what the timeframe involved was for the audio messages. He asked if there was any evaluation done on the CCTV employed and also if there was any support available to the elderly to help them clean up private property. Mayor O'Rourke asked if there were any plans to upgrade the cleaning equipment as the current equipment was not sufficient. He also asked that the dog fouling initiative be rolled out to Athlone as a matter of urgency that it was very important that it be done. Cllr Hogan advised the members that he was aware that in Athlone in recent months that an operation was carried out whereby inspections were carried out on householders in the District. Mr Ciaran Jordan answered the Councillors questions as follows. In advised that in relation to upgrading cleaning equipment that it was not specifically outlined in the plan, but that the Council were considering a chewing gum removal machine. He advised that the roll out of dog fouling dispensers were not cheap but were also very dependent on the community taking care of them and replenishing stock. In relation to the audio messages he advised that they were expensive somewhere in the region of €3500 for two for six months. With regard to the CCTV he advised that a report was submitted to the SPC and that this could be circulated to the members. With regard to powers of inspection we have certain powers to inspect however with the pay by weight initiative it is more difficult to monitor. With regard to control of dogs on the Greenway Ciaran Jordan informed the meeting that signs were in place on the route. Cllr O'Brien asked that Athlone Municipal District have an additional Community Warden as there is only one person in place currently and there is a wide area to cover.

To agree date for in committee meeting with Athlone Municipal District PPN

It was agreed to hold the meeting on Thursday the 22nd June, 2017 at 15.30pm

To update members on applications made under Clár, Town & Village Renewal and Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Grant Schemes

Mr. Barry Kehoe Director of Services gave a presentation to the members in relation the applications made for the various grant schemes. He advised the members that the tourist train would most likely be the large scale project that would be submitted.

Cllr O'Brien asked at what stage was the feasibility study in relation to the tourist train and he was advised by Mr. Kehoe that it was currently in progress.

To consider and approve second tranche of Festival and Event Grants 2017

Mr. Barry Kehoe advised the members of the proposed various amounts that were being given to groups in relation to the Festival and Events Grants 2017.

It was proposed by Cllr Dolan and seconded by Cllr Keena and resolved

The Mayor stated that it was great to see festivals based on craft and food receiving support.

To consider and approve Community Grants for 2017

Mr Kehoe outlined the grants proposed for the community groups.

Cllr Paul Hogan proposed that the grant allocation for the force racing group which were transition year students from the Marist College be increased from €325 to €1000. This was seconded by Cllr McManus and resolved.

The Community Grant allocations was proposed by Cllr Keena and seconded by Cllr Dolan

To consider recommendations from Parking Sub-Committee

This was proposed by Cllr. T Farrell and seconded by Cllr McManus and resolved

To receive an update on Church St Enhancement Project

Mr. Pat Keating gave a brief presentation on recent updates in relation to the project. Cllr O'Rourke asked when the project liaison officer would be appointed. Cllr Farrell asked that the position be based in Athlone. Mr. Barry Kehoe advised that the appointment would be made in June and that it would be someone currently employed by Westmeath County Council .

To nominate Members to attend European Peoples Festival in La Chataigneraie, from Saturday 22nd July to Saturday 29th July, 2017.

Mr. Pat Keating advised the members that the group would be travelling by ferry as opposed to flying as in the past. Cllr McManus proposed that Cllr Hogan attend and this was seconded by Cllr Keena and resolved. Cllr Hogan proposed Cllr Dolan attend and this was seconded by Cllr Keena and resolved.

To receive a report on Derelict Sites in Athlone Municipal District.

Mr. Frank Dolan District Administrator presented a report to the members on Derelict Sites in Athlone Municipal District. A discussion followed on a number of derelict sites in the district and in relation to levies charged and collected on sites. Cllr O'Rourke advised the members that as this was the subject matter of motion (e) and questions 12 & 4 that they could be dealt with as part of the discussion. Cllr Keena asked that in relation to his question how the building in question can go on and be removed off the register at such a rate. Mr Pat Keating District Manager advised the members that Local Authorities have to adhere to regulations and that the site in question was monitored regularly. Cllr O'Rourke stated that he found it appalling that the Government and Local Authorities don't do more in relation to derelict sites. He asked if Westmeath County Council were too lenient in relation to derelict sites and that we should be proactive instead of reactive. He asked the executive what could be done in relation to purchasing the car park attached to the site. Cllr Paul Hogan advised the members as a member of the Environment SPC chair that the SPC were going to take a more stringent approach with regard to Derelict Sites. Barry Kehoe stated that The CPO process was both a lengthy and costly process to engage in.

In relation to question 4 and the building in question Barry Kehoe advised the members that it was under review, that a structural engineer had been employed to assess it and he advised the members that it was difficult to progress for a number of reasons. He stated that Westmeath County Council were attempting to put a formal plan in place with the owners to deal with the situation.

To receive an update on the Acquisition of Lands for the Railway Field Road

Mr. Barry Kehoe advised the members that a line had been established for the fence. He stated that drawings and documentation would now be prepared for Part 8 planning process and that agreement remained to be concluded on accommodation works and compensation.

Questions

- 1) T. Farrell When will the kerbing be finished at Tubberclair Crossroads

Reply: All the planned works were completed as part of the project funded by TII at the time. There is currently no funding to do any additional works.

Supp Q: Can the engineer look at it

Reply: Yes

- 2) T. Farrell When will the Goldsmith Heritage trail signs be erected

Reply: It was agreed at a prior Municipal District meeting that the District Engineer would meet with local interested parties regarding what signs may be required. The District Engineer was never contacted to attend such a meeting. Once the extent of the signage required is assessed a funding source will have to be identified.

Supp Reply : The new Heritage Officer with review

- 3) T. Farrell: When will Westmeath County Council erect information boards at various Goldsmith sites mainly at Lissoy and Kilkenny West

Reply: Westmeath County Council currently have no plans to erect information boards at these locations.

Supp Reply: The new Heritage Officer will review

- 4) Cllr A O'Rourke What is the up-to-date situation regarding the derelict building at the rear of Sheffield Jewellers, Lloyds Lane

Reply: This property is a protected building that is in a derelict condition and is a potential dangerous structure. It is privately owned and the owners have indicated their agreement to the Council doing necessary works, selling property and recouping their costs. However, they have not yet provided sufficient confirmation / details of this.

In February, the Members were advised that a further report was awaited from our structural engineer; the Engineer has subsequently sought a conservation report and the report is required to address the following points:

- 1. Whether it is a dangerous structure**
- 2. Its protected status**
- 3. The impact on adjoining properties**
- 4. The cost of carrying out works (this could be in excess of €75,000) and**
- 5. The value of the site after works are carried out**

On receipt of this, an assessment can be made by the Council of how best to proceed.

- 5) Cllr A O'Rourke What decision has this Municipal District reached regarding the design lighting of Athlone Castle & the Town Bridge following the tests that were carried out some months ago with contractors

Reply: The Council is awaiting the comprehensive design of the lighting scheme and a suitable funding opportunity. When such an opportunity arises, an application for assistance will be made.

- 6) Cllr A O'Rourke When will the remainder of the 'out-of-specification' road ramps around the town be dealt with following the decision last year to tackle all ramps that were too high

Reply: No funding was allocated by the Members in the current year's Roads Programme. Any programme to bring all the ramps in the town into line with the current specification will have to be considered by the Members, in the context of their priorities, as part of the 2018 Roads Programme.

- 7) Cllr M O'Brien: When will traffic calming measures be implemented at Ard Grainne, Moate

Reply: It is anticipated that the measures will be implemented in September.

- 8) Cllr M. O'Brien: When will the footpath be completed at Ballycumber Road, Moate

Reply: It is anticipated that the next phase of this footpath will be undertaken in September.

- 9) Cllr M. O'Brien: Can an update be given regarding town renewal projects in Moate

Reply:

1. The preparation of a streetscape plan is underway and a draft should be available by the end of June.
2. Works at the harbour have commenced and should be completed by the end of June
3. Some heritage signage has been ordered and will be erected by the end of June. Other signage is currently being prepared for procurement.

- 10) Cllr F. Keena: When will the tree stumps in Mayfield Grove be removed and new trees sowed as was agreed with the residents.

Reply: This will be considered in tandem with the planned footpath works on the estate in September.

- 11) Cllr F. Keena: Can this Municipal District give an update on the provision of the new information tourist signs in Ballymore

Reply: Once the new Tourism Officer commences with Westmeath County Council one of the tasks will be to introduce a consistent design for all such tourism boards throughout the county. The District Engineer will then arrange procurement of the board for Ballymore.

- 12) Cllr F. Keena: Can this Municipal District give a full update on the horrendous dereliction state of the old Athlone Shopping Centre as it faces onto St. Mary's Church

Reply: In response to a Question in June 2016, the Members were advised as follows:

"This site was previously on the derelict sites register and action was being taken by the Council under a Section 11 Notice. Improvement works were carried out and the site was removed from the register. A further inspection was carried out in the past week and it is concluded that the site should continue to be monitored but that no action under derelict sites is merited at this time."

The site has now deteriorated significantly and Notices requiring works be carried out and to place the site on the Register again are being issued.

- 13) Cllr J. Dolan: When are the results of the speed surveys in Ballinahown and Glasson going to be completed

Reply: The Transportation Section is liaising with TII regarding the two driver feedback signs erected in Glasson and Ballinahown in 2016. It is envisaged that a fully analysed set of results will be available in Q3 2017.

Supp Q: When will the report come before the members

Reply: When the TII forward their report it will be an agenda item on a future meeting.

- 14) Cllr. J. Dolan: Can we have an update on the proposed relocation of the Tourist office in Athlone

Reply: The District manager has been in contact with Failte Ireland to arrange a meeting with Cllrs O'Rourke and Dolan as previously agreed to make a case for relocating the tourist office.

- 15) Cllr J. Dolan: When will the verges at the junctions in the district be trimmed for safety.

Reply: The contractor who won the tender to trim verges and selected junctions in the District has commenced work and it is anticipated that all the scheduled works will be completed within the next two weeks.

Correspondence

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

- Correspondence from the Department of Defence informing the council that they had agreed to Custume Barracks be made open to the public a number of days a week
- Department of acknowledging receipting of the correspondence in relation to the motion and advising that a review of the first 12 months of operation of the scheme Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is currently being undertaken

Motions:

- a) Cllr. T. Farrell: That Athlone Municipal District write to the Department of Social Protection asking them to promote Community Based Organisations (CBO's) where they are operational, e.g. Westmeath Home Comforts run by Athlone Community Services Council. These are not-for-profit organisations.

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

The members supported the motion and a letter will issue

- b) Cllr. T. Farrell That Athlone Municipal District write to the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) to request clarification on local needs for planning purposes and to include same as an agenda item at the next monthly meeting of Westmeath County Council.

Reply: The issue of Rural Housing Policy is receiving significant attention at present, both locally through the Council's Rural Housing Sub Committee and nationally within the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. Local Authorities have been instructed by the Department not to amend their policies while these deliberations are ongoing at national level. In this context, it is likely that any changes to this policy will be considered in the context of the formal Review of the County Development Plan, which will commence in early 2018.

Cllr Farrell highlighted that there was different criteria in different counties. He asked if any report had been forthcoming from the committee that was established. Cllr Dolan expressed the importance of having new families in communities to keep them alive. Mr Barry Kehoe advised the members that it was a complex issue, and that the department had advised all Local Authorities not to amend current policy until such time as a decision would be taken nationally on the issue of local need

He advised the members that the only policy that could be placed on the agenda for the CPG was the current policy.

The members supported the motion and agreed to write to the CPG to have the item placed on the agenda

- c) Cllr. T. Farrell: That Athlone Municipal District erect two stop signs at Curragh Road, Rosemount; namely at Fagans' crossroads and Keenaghan's crossroads.

Reply: The District Engineer will arrange for these junctions to be inspected and STOP signs erected if deemed appropriate.

- d) Cllr. A.O'Rourke: For this Municipal District to draw-up a plan, with costings, to substantially enhance our main roundabouts in the Town by using them to showcase what our town is about; for example; our heritage, our culture, our industry etc., similar to the job done at the Cornamaddy Roundabout.

Reply: The sculpture at the Cornamaddy Roundabout has been very successful and is an attractive feature on that approach to Athlone. It is agreed that there is potential to adopt a similar approach at other key roundabouts and a process to design and construct features of interest will be put in place. Proposals and estimated costing will be brought before the Members for approval in due course.

Barry Kehoe advised that the sponsorship raised €35000 and that the money was not specific to the District but that the revenue went to the General Revenue Budget. Cllr O'Brien sought to have the sponsorship received be kept in the area of which it related to

- e) Cllr. A. O'Rourke: For this Municipal District to take a new and more courageous approach to the blight of derelict buildings in the town and district.

Reply: This is a significant issue within the town and district as there are a number of derelict sites which are having a detrimental impact on the appearance of the town and wider area. The District has taken action in these cases and they are at various points in the enforcement process. However, the Council must operate within the bounds of the legislation and available resources.

This motion was taken while the derelict site report was discussed.

- f) Cllr. M. O'Brien That Athlone Municipal District improve the visibility of the pedestrian crossing at Cornamaddy roundabout in the interest of public safety

Reply: The Council can make contact with the Regional Safety Section of TII with regard to this crossing if the Members so wish. Any works identified will have to be approved and funded by TII.

Suspension of Standing Orders:

The mayor asked that the standing orders be suspended, to allow for the remaining items to be dealt with. This was proposed by Cllr Keena and seconded by Cllr Farrell and resolved.

- g) Cllr. M. O'Brien: That Athlone Municipal District reduces the speed limit to 50kph and erect speed limit signage at Drumraney church.

Reply: This will have to be considered in the context of the next speed limit review.

- h) Cllr. M. O'Brien: That Athlone Municipal District carry out road restoration works outside Moate Community School.

Reply: The Roads Programme for 2017 has been approved by the Members. Any restoration works on this road will have to be considered by the Members, in the context of their priorities, as part of the 2018 Roads Programme.

- i) Cllr. A. McManus: That this Municipal District remediate the extended walkway at Burgess Park to ensure safety

Reply: The Council is currently seeking funding to carry out these works.

- j) Cllr. A. McManus: That this Municipal District erect gates to the rear of the houses at Abbey Road

Reply: Such a gate would have to have the consent of all the residents accessing the lane and a funding source would have to be identified.

- k) Cllr. F. Keena: That this Municipal District write to both Denis Naughton, TD, Minister for Communications, Climate action and Environment and Kevin Boxer Moran, TD, Minister for State at Office of Public Works (OPW) and Flood Relief requesting them to support the long term future of the Athlone Mail Centre

Reply: A letter can issue to both Ministers if the Members so decide
The members all supported the motion

- l) Cllr. F. Keena: That this Municipal District provide traffic calming measures in Ardbrae Park and make its footpaths wheelchair friendly.

Reply: The Roads Programme for 2017 has been approved by the Members. Any works in Ardbrae Park will have to be considered by the Members, in the context of their priorities, as part of the 2018 Roads Programme.

Supp reply: The District Engineer agreed to carry out a speed survey in the interim

- m) Cllr. F. Keena: That this Municipal District provide traffic calming measures such as a raised platform at the junction to Rindoon / Hazelwood / Clonbrusk and the Coosan Road

Reply: The Roads Programme for 2017 has been approved by the Members. Any works such as a raised platform at the junction to Rindoon / Hazelwood / Clonbrusk and the Coosan Road will have to be considered by the Members, in the context of their priorities, as part of the 2018 Roads Programme.

- n) Cllr. J. Dolan: That this Municipal District provide a new horticulture team for the provision of flowers and maintenance of planting in Athlone

Reply: The Municipal District's budgets are not adequate to support such a full time venture. The District achieves best value through the annual procurement of

the flowers from the open market and providing the ongoing maintenance from its own workforce.

Mr. Barry Kehoe advised that he could see the merit of the motion but advised that it was a complex process as employment of staff had to be done through Human Resources and that a current workforce plan was in place that was adhered to.

- o) Cllr. J. Dolan: That this Municipal District provide a couple of shelters and picnic areas along the Cycleway

Reply: This is a worthwhile proposal and will be considered in the context of future funding opportunities.

- p) Cllr J. Dolan: That this Municipal District write to the Ministers for Rural Development and Social Protection asking for a number of changes to the eligibility for the CE schemes to enable them to continue.

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

Following a discussion on the motion the members agreed to write to the Minister

AOB

The Mayor Cllr O'Rourke advised the members in relation to the agreed schedule of meeting that the meeting agreed on the 2nd of January, 2018 should be moved to the 8th of January, 2017. The members agreed to the rescheduled meeting.

Cllr Tom Farrell raised the issue of the burst watermain that affected large parts of the district on the weekend before the meeting. He advised that alot of homes and businesses were affected and that there had been very little communication from Irish Water. He sought a report on the incident from Irish Water. Cllr O'Brien advised that the town of Moate was at a standstill. He highlighted a number of businesses that lost out as they had no water. He also stressed the lack of communication from Irish Water.

Cllr Keena again stated that the communication from Irish water was very poor and how the business people were hit very hard. Cllr John Dolan advised that he had been inundated with calls from the public. He did not understand how there was no centralised parts centre put in place by Irish Water whereby if the incident did occur again that the parts necessary were already stocked thus speeding up the repair times. Cllr Angus O'Rourke again highlighted the lack of a system for communication with Councillors and the public.

The members agreed that they would write to Irish Water to seek a direct meeting with Irish Water to take place in Athlone.

Cllr A. O'Rourke
Mayor

Date