

Minutes of the Athlone Municipal District Meeting which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 3.00 p.m. on Tuesday 2nd May 2017.

Attendance:

Mayor: Cllr. J. Dolan

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

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

Votes of Congratulation / sympathy

None put forward

Minutes

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan 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 3rd April, 2017.

Also, it was proposed by Cllr. Hogan and Seconded by Cllr. Dolan and resolved,
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the in committee meeting held on the 7th April, 2017 in relation to Church St enhancement.

Also, it was proposed by Cllr Hogan and Seconded by Cllr Keena and resolved,
"That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the in committee meeting held on the 18th April, 2017.

Matters Arising:

Cllr. Keena asked if a date had been agreed for the Elliott Road naming ceremony.
The District Manager advised that he had no response from Roscommon County Council in relation to a suitable date for the Cumann na mBan bridge but that he would advise the members when it was forthcoming.

To note outline Programme for Church Street Enhancement:

The District Manager outlined memo as circulated to the members setting out preliminary timeframes. The members sought an implementation plan, some input into the detailed design e.g. soft landscaping and stressed the importance of keeping the public informed.

The Director advised the members that an implementation plan would be put in place for the EU funding and that the members would be involved in design elements such as landscaping etc. He advised that it is always difficult to manage third parties views but that the Council are always open to suggestions while at the same time adhering to the criteria that the council must follow. He advised that the website would be kept up to date and that a Project Liaison Officer would be put in place.

Cllr Keena asked if the item could be kept on the agenda of the Athlone Municipal District.

To receive presentation on Town and Village Renewal Programme 2017

The Director outlined the application process which is 80% funded; 15 projects can be submitted for the County and the Council has advertised locally for expressions of interest from communities. The focus is on projects that would provide positive economic impact and projects showing entrepreneurship, training facilities, tourism initiatives.

He advised that Westmeath County Council would need to submit good schemes and that the application would be co-orientated by the Community Sector of Westmeath County Council. He advised that the proposed tourism train could be put forward with other Local Authorities involved or if they were not in favour of it that Westmeath County Council could put the project forward on its own.

The Members asked about funding, feasibility study (tourism train), project criteria and a designated point of contact.

The Director advised that in a joint local authority application, a case could be made for each of them to receive €200,000. 20% of the cost of any project would be met from the Councils Revenue Budget. Expressions of interest should be with the Council by the 12th of May. The feasibility study would be completed by the end of June and the Council would probably be looking for a private operator most likely on a three years basis. With regard to submitting Portlick as a project he advised that it was difficult to put forward projects that would require planning permission and noted that Portlick is located in a special area of conservation.

Update on Cycleway Bridge across the River Shannon in Athlone

The Director advised the members that there had been a significant delay with the EIS in relation to the bridge across the Shannon but that an advertisement had been placed in the Irish times on Saturday 28th April, 2017 and the EIS would be lodged in the coming week. He also advised that the CPO has commenced in relation to the walkway in front of the Radisson Hotel where ramps would be positioned; the public right of way would be closed and replaced with a board walk for the public.

The Members welcomed the lodgement of the EIS and expressed their disappointment at the delay. In response to Members queries, the Director advised that one berth would be closed during construction and that it would not be suitable for larger vessels once construction was completed. He stated that An Bord Pleanála would issue an indicative timeframe for decision once they receive the EIS but that they were not bound by it.

Civic Address of Recognition for Moate Ballad Group

It was agreed to hold the Civic Address of Recognition for Moate Ballad Group on the 22nd May 2017 in the Chamber at 5.30 p.m. The members agreed that a meeting of the Parking Sub-Committee would be held on the same date at 4.00 p.m.

To reschedule June meeting and AGM to 12th June.

Cllr Paul Hogan advised that the precedent was that the Annual General Meeting would be held one hour before the Municipal District Meeting. The members agreed that the Annual General Meeting would be held at 2.00pm on the 12th June, 2017 and that the Municipal District Meeting would be held at 3.00pm.

Update on the Acquisition of Lands for the Railway Field Road.

The members were advised that there was a minor delay in meeting with Irish Rail personnel in order to look at the line of the fence at the bus depot as Irish Rail had to have buses there in order to be able to test the space.

Questions

1. Cllr. T. Farrell: What is the up to date position in relation to the R390 at Drumraney
It is anticipated that works will be carried out on this section of road in June of this year.
2. Cllr .T. Farrell: When will the carpark at Ballymore Church be completed.
Surfacing works will be completed within the next 2 weeks and line marking will be completed shortly thereafter, depending on weather.
3. Cllr T. Farrell: Can Athlone Municipal District meet with ESB and EIR to discuss making Church St, free of overhead cables and wires
Letters were issued to all the utilities last year and site meetings have taken place. Each utility is looking at their respective assets and how they may be rationalised and they are also looking at their future requirements.
4. Cllr. J.Dolan: How many reports of littering or dumping have been logged this year in this district and what were the outcomes
80 instances of illegal dumping have been logged so far in 2017 in addition to 8 for abandoned vehicles.
Approximately €31,000 has been spent from Municipal District funding on pick up and disposal of these.
24 litter fines were issued, 6 have been paid and one Notice requiring works to be undertaken has been issued.
5. Cllr J. Dolan: How many planning applications have we received in this District in 2017 and how much of an increase or decrease is it
As of 26th April 2017, 80 planning applications have been received. This compares to 48 for the same period in 2016 and 42 for the same period in 2015.
Supplementary: What additional resources will be made available?
This will be monitored and resources applied as necessary.
6. Cllr.J.Dolan: When are the road markings going to be repainted at the Clonbonny turn.
The District Engineer will arrange for the STOP Line and text to be reinstated at this junction when the lining contractor is next in the District

7. Cllr.F. Keena: What progress is being made regarding getting the owners of the barges on the Accommodation road side of the Shannon to paint them
Waterways Ireland is the responsible authority along the river and are in discussion with the barge owners in relation to future development in this area.
8. Cllr.F Keena: What plans are being put in place to erect street name signs at eye level within Willow Park
There are no plans to erect street name signs at eye level within Willow Park as a budget has not been provided in the current year. This could be considered as a scheme in the context of the Members' priorities for funding as part of the 2018 Roads Programme.
9. Cllr F.Keena: When is it envisaged that the roundabout name signs will be erected
The text on the signs is currently being translated into Irish. Once this is received the District Engineer will procure and erect the signs when a funding source has been identified.
10. Cllr. A. O'Rourke: When will the free WIFI spots that were budgeted for this year (in three locations in Athlone) be implemented and operational
Procurement documents are being drafted for the following locations in Athlone Municipal District: John Count McCormack Square, adjacent to Athlone Castle and at the plaza fronting Moate library. These will be installed when ready but should be in place by the end of the third quarter.
11. Cllr.A.O'Rourke: Has the weed spraying commenced this year yet around the town, and what is the planned weed spraying schedule for the year
Weed spraying is commencing this week. All public roads within the urban areas will be sprayed.
12. Cllr A. O'Rourke: Can the District provide a summary of the performance of the grant scheme for housing adaptations for 2016 to include: the money allocated by the members in our 2016 budget, along with central government allocations during the year, the number of applications received, the number of jobs completed, the amount of money spent and any other relevant information pertaining to this grant scheme for 2016.
In 2016, 104 applications were received under the grant scheme for housing adaptations, 107 applications were processed and 93 adaptations were completed. The scheme is 80% funded by the Department and 20% by the Council. A total of €681,683 was paid out in 2016 from a total budget of €796,061. 10 adaptations that were approved in 2016 were paid out in 2017
13. Cllr M. O'Brien: Can the 50kph sign on the Hall Road Moate be moved back down the road from the residential area in the interest of public safety.
The location of the existing 50 kph special speed limit will be assessed in accordance with the document 'Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland'

and if warranted, a proposal to vary the Speed Limit Bye Laws will be brought forward in due course.

14. Cllr. M.O'Brien: Can Athlone Municipal District liaise with Moate Golf Club with a view to resolving the issue of golf balls spraying out into the Sliabh Rua housing estate and causing damage.

This is a matter for the Residents and/or Resident's Association to pursue directly with Moate Golf Club and is not a matter for Athlone Municipal District

15. Cllr M.O'Brien: Can all residents in the restricted parking zone in Moate be provided with parking permits as soon as possible.

All residents within the restricted parking zone can apply for a Resident's Permit from Athlone Municipal District as set out in the bye-laws. To date, two applications have been received and are being processed.

Correspondence:

The District Administrator outlined correspondence received which will be circulated

Motions:

- a) Cllr. T. Farrell:

That Athlone Municipal District carry out a traffic survey at Cornamagh cross as vehicles are having difficulty exiting onto the N55 at peak hours

The District Engineer will arrange for an assessment of this junction.

All the members supported the motion

- b) Cllr. T. Farrell:

That the hill of Knockcasta be included in all heritage trails and Failte Ireland brochures due to its proximity to the cycleway and its links to the Hill of Uisneach

Westmeath County Council is currently in the process of appointing a Tourism Officer and this motion will be brought to the attention of this Officer in the context of the Westmeath Tourism Strategy. It is intended that this position would be filled before the end of May 2017.

All the members supported the motion

- c) Cllr. T. Farrell:

That Athlone Municipal District writes to the Minister of Agriculture to change the forestry regulations to include that residences in the vicinity be notified before permission is granted for planting

A letter can issue to the Minister for Food, Agriculture and the Marine if the Members so decide

All the members supported the motion and agreed to write to the Minister of Agriculture

- d) Cllr J.Dolan:

That this Municipal District discusses the provision of funding for the various house adaptation grants for 2017 in this district.

Westmeath County Council was advised by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government on 28th February 2017 of an interim allocation of

€1.295m (includes €259,000 of Westmeath County Council funding) for the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability. This interim allocation is 65% of this Council's 2016 allocation. Notwithstanding any further allocation from the Department, there is a remaining balance of €148,000 in the Council Budget for 2017 and €171,000 that was carried over from 2016, amounting to €319,000 in total.

Of the initial allocation of €1.295m, €517,000 was allocated to the Athlone District of which €303,000 has been used to cover expenditure in late 2016 and as of the 26th of May 2017, €70,000 is unspent. The Housing Section is keeping expenditure in both Districts under review and further resources will be allocated to the Athlone District when these are required.

e) Cllr J.Dolan:

That this Municipal District requests a change to the income limits for eligibility to apply for inclusion for social housing.

The income limits which apply for eligibility for Social Housing are set out in Part 4 of SI 84/2011 – Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011, as amended by SI 136/2011 – Social Housing Assessment (Amendment) Regulations 2011. It is a matter for the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government to amend the regulations to revise income eligibility limits.

All the members supported the motion and agreed to write to the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government

f) Cllr J.Dolan:

That this Municipal District includes road number L53024-0 in the roads program.

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.

g) Cllr.F.Keena

That this Municipal District carry out a report on the Athlone Town Walls similar to the one that was carried out for Athlone Castle

A significant study of Athlone Town Walls was undertaken in 2005 and a copy is being made available to Members. Any proposals for further work can be considered by the Heritage Officer and Forum in due course.

All the members supported the motion.

h). Cllr.F.Keena

That this Municipal District surfaces the back lane between Clonbrock Court and the Greenway

There is no funding to carry out these works in the current year. This could be considered as a scheme in the context of the Members' priorities for funding as part of the 2018 Roads Programme.

A further discussion took place as some members were of the thinking an undertaken was give to resurface this when the cycleway was complete. Mr Pat Nally District Engineer advised that the commitment was in relation to the rear of Colonbrock but he undertook to

find some material in the interim as this area is being dug up next year as part of the Athlone main drainage scheme

i) Cllr.F.Keena

That this Municipal District provide a section of footpath along the Hall Road, Moate from the Dublin road to link up with the existing footpath on the Hall Road.

There is no finding to carry out these works in the current year. This could be considered as a scheme in the context of the Members' priorities for funding as part of the 2018 Roads Programme.

j) Cllr .A. O'Rourke:

For the Cathaoirleach Awards to be held in Athlone in 2018.

This can be referred to the Corporate Policy Group, if the Members so decide.

All the members supported the motion

k) Cllr .A. O'Rourke:

For this Municipal District to start investing in modern and practical, motorised street cleaning equipment.

A review of the street cleaning schedule and requirements will be carried out in the context of the completion of the Church Street Enhancement Project. The requirement for any additional equipment will necessitate a corresponding increase in the annual budget for street cleaning.

Cllr O'Rourke provided material in relation to the different equipment that was available. He stated that Athlone should be presenting a professional approach to street cleaning

Mr. Barry Kehoe stated that the town needed to be kept as best as it can be. He advised that the Street cleaning schedule may need to be put back before the members and that a plan of action would need to be put in place for 2018. He stated that the Council and Members could look at other towns similar to Athlone e.g. Kinsale, Killarney or Clonakilty and look at what they are doing.

Mr Pat Keating , District Manager advised the members that he had been in contact with his equivalent in Clonakilty and that he was waiting on a final date to be agreed to host a deputation from Athlone Municipal District. He advised that he asked that the deputation would be able to meet the Chamber and Architect.

l) Cllr .A. O'Rourke:

For this Municipal District to introduce a safer pedestrian crossing solution at Ankers Bower around Behan's shop particularly for school children crossing from Behan's to Croghan's side of the road which involves crossing two roads off a roundabout

The District Engineer can arrange for a survey to be carried out at this location to identify if the warrants are satisfied for a controlled crossing, if the Members so wish. The provision of funding for any works identified will have to be considered by the Members, in the context of their priorities, as part of the 2018 Roads Programme.

Mayor Cllr John Dolan asked that the Standing Orders be suspended. This was proposed by Cllr. Hogan and seconded by Cllr Dolan

m) Cllr. P. Hogan:

That this Municipal District consider the provision of a bus car park on the parcel of land south of Scoil Na gCeithre Maistri and north of the greenway.

It is intended that a draft revised Plan for all lands between the Gaelscoil and Garrycastle would be presented to the Athlone Municipal district at a forthcoming meeting. It is recommended that this motion be considered in the context of this draft revised plan.

All the members supported the motion. It was agreed that a sign would be erected at the Sport Centre roundabout and that a sign would be placed at Athlone Town Stadium.

Cllr Hogan asked that the schools in the area be written to and advised of the parking available

n) Cllr. P. Hogan:

That this Municipal District provide extension of community garden at John Paul Park, as previously agreed.

The District Engineer will arrange liaison with the local residents and arrange the necessary work before the end of this month. This work has been delayed due to the departure of an engineer from the District.

o) Cllr.M.O'Brien

That Athlone Municipal District carries out immediate footpath repairs on Athlone Road in Moate in the interest of pedestrian health and safety.

The District Engineer will arrange for any minor maintenance works required on this footpath. Any large-scale works will have to be considered by the Members, in the context of their priorities, as part of the 2018 Roads Programme.

p) Cllr.M.O'Brien

That Athlone Municipal District provides a full report regarding the current position of housing estates that are ready to be taken in charge by the council.

There are 38 housing estates within in the County which are being examined in relation to the taking in charge process. Of these, a total of 8 estates have been progressed to an advanced stage; these estates are as follows:

- 1. Cois Leine, Collinstown**
- 2. Beechpark, Collinstown**
- 3. Canal Walk, Athlone**
- 4. Cois Na hAbhainn, Moate**
- 5. Glenatore, Athlone**

6. Rathgowan Wood/Park, Mullingar

7. Coill Rua, Mullingar

8. Woodville, Athlone.

Of these, 6 are awaiting assessment by a Water Services Engineer to conduct an inspection and complete technical reports for assessment by Irish Water (Schedule 1 and 2 Reports).

Schedule 1 and 2 Reports have been completed for both Beech Park and Woodville and a response from Irish Water is awaited.

Mr. Barry Kehoe the Director of Services advised the members that this item would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. He stated that a report would be furnished to the members on the estates in the Athlone Municipal District in advance of the meeting

q) Cllr. M. O'Brien

That Athlone Municipal District write to the Minister for Finance asking him to widen the standard income tax band in order to help hard pressed lower and middle income earners.

A letter can issue to the Minister for Finance if the Members so decide

The members agreed to write a letter to the Minister for Finance

Cllr Michael O'Brien tabled Cllr McManus motions in her absence.

r) Cllr. A. McManus:

That this Municipal district provides paint hopscotch/ games along the greenway

It is considered that more play areas are required along the Greenway. However, these should be provided adjacent to the mainline rather than along it, in the interests of safety. A survey of the area will be undertaken to identify suitable locations.

s) Cllr. A. McManus:

That this municipal district provide for a designated set down area outside the Main Post Office on Pearse St.

This can be considered by the parking sub-committee

t) Cllr. A. McManus:

That this Municipal District write to Irish water requesting an update on the current proposal for the south Westmeath water scheme, specifically with regard to the proposed capacity of the new water treatment plant for Athlone

A letter can issue to Irish Water if the Members so decide.

The members supported the motion and agreed to write to Irish Water.

AOB

Mr Barry Kehoe Director of Services advised the members in relation to Festival and Events funding , he advised that the closing date for receipt of applications was the 17th May, 2017

