

**Minutes of meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Mtek Building,
Armagh Road, Monaghan on Tuesday 8th May, 2012 at 10.00 a.m.**

Chair: Cllr S. Coyle, Mayor.

Present: Cllrs Bannigan, Carthy, Carville, Conlon, Connolly, Crowe, Gallagher, Keelan, Maxwell, McElvaney, B. McKenna, McNally, McPhillips, Murray, O'Brien, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Mr. D. Fallon, A/County Manager, Mr. P. Clifford and Mr. A. King, Directors of Service, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, Mr. J. McGrath, Senior Engineer, Mr. A. Hughes, Senior Planner, Ms. N. Woods, SEO Housing and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

Apology: Cllr S. McKenna

The Mayor advised the Members that he had received three notices of Urgent Business as follows:

(1) Notice in the names of Cllrs Coyle, Gallagher, McNally, O'Brien and O'Hanlon

That Monaghan County Council requests the immediate reversal by the HSE of the ludicrous decision to close kitchen services at Monaghan General Hospital and at St. Mary's Hospital, Castleblayney. It also requests an immediate meeting with the Minister for Health Dr. James Reilly, T.D., to discuss the ongoing reduction of hospital services in County Monaghan.

(2) Notice in the names of Cllrs Coyle, Gallagher, McNally, O'Brien and O'Hanlon

That Monaghan County Council seeks the immediate approval of the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar TD and the National Roads Authority to move the Clontibret to the Border N2 road project to route selection/design state. This will avoid the sterilisation of the huge amounts of land in the north Monaghan area and it will also allay the serious concerns of residents, farmers and businesses on the route. Overall, it will allow proper planning for the area in the County Development Plan 2013-2019

(3) Notice in the names of Cllrs Connolly and S. Treanor:

That in view of the fact that the cut in the rate of VAT from 13.5 to 9% which was introduced by the Government on the 1st of July 2011 and due to end in December 2013 and is now due for review. And the fact that the Minister for Finance has indicated that the scheme may be discontinued in December 2013, Monaghan County Council calls on the Minister for Finance to further extend the scheme and consider its retention on an on-going basis.

It was agreed to deal with all three notices of urgent business at 4.30 p.m.

1. Confirmation of Minutes:

On the proposal of Cllr Crowe, seconded by Cllr Carville it was agreed that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 2nd April, 2012, be confirmed.

2. Correspondence:

The following correspondence was circulated with the agenda -

- Letter of acknowledgement from An Taoiseach in relation to the Household Charge.
- Letter of acknowledgement from An Taoiseach in relation to the undocumented Irish in the U.S.A.
- Email from the Office of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation regarding meeting with a deputation from the Council on 18th May 2012.
- Letter of acknowledgement from the Minister for Social Protection in relation to the redundancy entitlements for the former staff of the GAME store in Monaghan.
- Letter of acknowledgement from the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in relation to the closure of the GAME store in Monaghan.
- Letter from Leo Varadkar, TD, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in relation to funding and implementations plans for the A5 project.
- Letter of acknowledgement from the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in relation to the Household Charge.
- Letter from Mr. P. Clifford, Town Manager, Carrickmacross Town Council in relation to the sale of the Market House Building in Carrickmacross to the Town Council.
- Letter from the CEO of IDA Ireland outlining the IDA's strategy in the North East Region and Co. Monaghan and declining an invitation to attend a Council meeting.
- Letter from Deputy Sean Conlan in relation to IDA led investment in County Monaghan.
- Resolution from Offaly County Council calling on the Government not to allow banks and semi-state companies to pay huge salaries and pensions to Managers and Directors.
- Resolution from Offaly County Council calling for the reform of pension schemes for Ministers and T.D.s.
- Letter from the Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs in relation to the undocumented Irish in the U.S.A.
- Letter from Cairde Choláiste Oiriail thanking the Council for its contribution towards the running costs of the Irish language weekend.
- Resolution from Donegal County Council in relation to social welfare payments for unemployed self employed individuals.
- Resolution from Donegal County Council calling on the Government to allocate the necessary funding to meet the demand for pensions and redundancy caused by the implementation of Government policy.
- Resolution from Donegal County Council calling on the Government to reduce the tax on fuel and introduce a fuel stabiliser.

- Letter from Deputy Sean Conlan in relation to the re-location of kitchen facilities from Monaghan General Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital to St. Davnets Hospital.
- Overview of EBR Interreg IVA 2007-2013.

Proposals arising out of correspondence:

On the proposal of Cllr Connolly, seconded by Cllr S. Treanor it was agreed that Monaghan County Council write again to the IDA stating that the Council finds their response not to attend a public meeting of Monaghan County Council unacceptable and we again ask that they re-consider their decision and accept an invite to attend a future meeting.

On the proposal of Cllr Gallagher, seconded by Cllr McNally it was agreed that this Council write to IDA Ireland seeking that they would meet a delegation from Monaghan County Council to discuss employment opportunities in County Monaghan.

On the proposal of Cllr Bannigan, seconded by Cllr McPhillips it was agreed that the Council establish a register of vacant commercial space to include size, location and suitability; number of jobs lost in recent past; numbers employed in county and that we use this information to promote the county in a positive way.

On the proposal of Cllr Gallagher, seconded by Cllr B. McKenna it was agreed that the Council adopt the resolution from Offaly County Council calling on the Government not to allow banks and semi-state companies to pay huge salaries and pensions to Managers and Directors.

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon, seconded by Cllr Carthy it was agreed that the Council write to the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation enquiring what legislation is the Government currently considering or has enacted that will prevent companies from exempting themselves from fulfilling their responsibilities regarding employees' statutory rights and entitlements particularly around issues of redundancy, as has been the recent experience of former employees of GAME, Lagan Brick and Vita Cortex among others that have been denied statutory entitlements.

On the proposal of Cllr B. McKenna, seconded by Cllr Maxwell it was agreed that the Council adopt the resolution from Offaly County Council calling on the Government to reform the pension scheme for Ministers and T.D.'s to bring it into line with public sector workers regards of age, qualification length of service etc.

On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr Carthy it was agreed that the Council adopt the resolution from Donegal County Council calling on the Government to reduce the high rate of duty on fuel and introduce a fuel stabiliser which would reduce duty as oil prices rise into the future.

On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr Carthy it was agreed that the Council adopt the resolution from Donegal County Council calling on the Minister for Social Protection to allow for unemployed Self Employed Individuals to gain social welfare payments from the date of non-employment thus helping stop the unemployed entrepreneur brain drain from our county and country.

On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr B. McKenna it was agreed that the Council invite Mr. John Bradley and Mr. Michael Best to a full Council meeting, the adjourned June meeting if possible, to discuss their research on the proposal for a border development zone.

On the proposal of Cllr Carthy, seconded by Cllr Keelan it was agreed that the Council approve, in principle, the transfer of the Market House Building in Carrickmacross to Carrickmacross Town Council.

On the proposal of Cllr Crowe, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor it was agreed that the Council request the I.D.A. to secure foreign investors to locate to the former Cargill Integra factory in Castleblayney, as soon as possible.

On the proposal of Cllr Carville, seconded by Cllr Crowe, it was agreed that this Council write to the Departments of Finance in the Republic and North of Ireland and the SEUPB seeking to ensure that the delivery of the Interreg V Programme be modelled on the system used to deliver Interreg III, with due regard being given to the implementation role of cross-border networks such as EBR and ICBAN

On the proposal of Cllr McElvaney, seconded by Cllr Carthy it was agreed that the Council write to the Health Service Executive inviting an official(s) to attend a meeting of the Council to discuss the closure of the kitchens at Monaghan General Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital, Castleblayney.

On the proposal of Cllr Bannigan, seconded by Murray it was agreed that the Council invite the CEO of Fisheries Ireland, Dr. Ciaran Byrne and Mr. Dick Caplice Coarse Fishing Federation to give a presentation to the Council at a future meeting.

3. Part VIII Local Government (Planning and Development) Regulations 2001

- (i) To consider granting permission for a pilot scheme to form a 17.5 acre willow plantation irrigated with final discharge quality water from Clontibret Sewerage Treatment Works, Lisglasson, Clontibret. (Ref 12/8002).

Mr. D. Fallon, A/County Manager referred to the pilot project under consideration and stated that this is an environmentally friendly way of dealing with sewerage treatment. He endorsed the content of the Directors report dated 19th April, 2012. which recommended that the Council proceed with the development, as proposed, subject to a number of conditions.

Cllr S. Conlon referred to concerns raised by a local resident in relation to the proximity of the proposed development to her domestic water well. She had requested that monitoring of water quality in her well be carried out on a regular basis and that a buffer zone of 100 metres be maintained between the proposed willow plantation/irrigation system and her water well. Cllr Conlon referred to a communication from a Teagasc official which also recommended a buffer zone of 100 metres.

Mr. M. Johnston, Senior Executive Engineer Water Services stated that officials had met with the resident in question and other concerned residents in late January in relation to this matter. Water Services recommends that no part of the distribution pipework/discharge be placed within 50 metres of a residential water well. Ongoing monitoring of the adjacent wells was conditioned as part of the recommendation for approval.

Cllr Conlon proposed, Cllr B. McKenna seconded that a buffer zone of 100 metres be maintained between the proposed willow plantation/irrigation system and her well.

Mr. Johnston stated that, in his opinion, the buffer zone of 50 metres was more than sufficient in this case, as the discharge water has already been treated to the required standard.

The Mayor put Cllr Conlon's proposal to the meeting. A vote by show of hands resulted in 13 for, 4 against and 1 abstention. The Mayor declared the proposal carried.

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon, seconded by Cllr Connolly it was agreed that the Council approve the pilot scheme to form a 17.5 acre willow plantation irrigated with final discharge quality water from Clontibret Sewerage Treatment Works for the treatment and bio-remediation of the water through the growth and harvesting of willows (Reference 12/8002) to comply with the Director's Report dated 19th April, 2012, as amended – buffer zone to be increased to 100 metres - and in accordance with Part VIII of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Regulations 2001.

4. To consider Section 183 Notice in relation to disposal of site at Drummond Otra, Carrickmacross

The members considered the Section 183 notice advising of the intention to dispose of 4.62 square metres of land to ESB Networks for the purpose of an ESB sub-station.

On the proposal of Cllr Carthy, seconded by Cllr O'Hanlon, it was agreed that the Council approve the disposal of 4.62 square metres of land at the Convent Lands, Drummond Otra, Carrickmacross to ESB Networks, in accordance with the terms of notice dated 18th April, 2012 under Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001.

5. To approve recommendations from Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 17th April, 2012.

Allocation of Grants - Environmental Fund: In response to a query from Cllr Conlon regarding funding for fishing clubs who had not applied under the Environmental Fund 2012, Mr. N. O'Connor advised that whilst there was limited funding available, he would endeavour to assist these clubs through the Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership fund which will be advertised in due course.

On the proposal of Cllr Carthy, seconded by Cllr Gallagher it was agreed that the recommendation from the CPG in relation to the allocation of grants under the Environmental Fund 2012 be approved.

On the proposal of Cllr Maxwell, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor it was agreed that the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 17th April, 2012 be approved.

6. To consider recommendations from the Housing SPC:

The members considered the following recommendation from the Housing SPC, the background to which was outlined by the Chair of the SPC, Cllr M. Carthy.

(1) Access to information by Councillors:

- (a) Until further notice, it is acknowledged that Monaghan County Council is obliged under Data Protection requirements to inform only those Councillors who have made written representations on behalf of applicants, in the event of these applicants being offered tenancies.
- (b) A letter to be sent to the Data Protection Commissioner asking:
 - (i) "What information can be given out to all public representatives pertaining to a tenant who has been allocated a house by Monaghan County Council?"
 - (ii) "At what stage following the notification of allocation to the tenant is it reasonable to inform all public representatives?"
- (c) In the event of a non clear response from the Data Protection Commissioner or for the necessity of further clarity to question (b) above, that Monaghan County Council seek a meeting with the Data Commissioners office.

During a debate on this item, a number of members felt that it was unfair that they were unable to get access to information relative to the people they make representations on behalf of. Cllr B. McKenna stated that T.D.'s can get access to information relating to their constituents and the same should apply for the local Councillors.

Cllr McPhillips proposed, Cllr Murray seconded – that Monaghan County Council calls on the Minister for Communications to bring forward legislation giving elected

local representatives the same rights as Oireachtas members with regard to the Data Protection Act so that Councillors may make adequate representations and be properly informed of the decisions of the Council Executive.

Following further discussion on this item, Cllr McPhillips stated that she wished to withdraw her proposal in favour of a 'tick-box' being included on the Housing Application form to indicate that the applicant consents to the release of their information to an elected member.

The Mayor put the recommendation from the Housing SPC to the meeting and it was agreed.

The members considered the following recommendation from the Housing SPC, the background to which was outlined by the Chair of the SPC, Cllr M. Carthy.

2. Differential Rent Scheme - Monaghan County Council

That Clause 14 in Monaghan County Council's Differential Rent Scheme 2005, be amended as follows:

Joint Income

'Where income is derived from Social Welfare payments and the recipients have opted for separate payments, rent will be assessed on the separate incomes.'

Original wording of Clause 14 was as follows:

'Where income is derived from Social Welfare payments and the recipients have opted for separate payments, rent will be assessed on the joint incomes.'

Cllr Carthy proposed, Cllr O'Hanlon seconded that the Council adopt the recommendation from the Housing SPC – 'Joint Income – Where income is derived from Social Welfare Payments and the recipients have opted for separate payments, rent will be assessed on the separate incomes'

Mr. A. King Director and Ms. N. Woods, SEO Housing explained that the existing Rent Scheme had been in place since 2005. An annual review of all rents is undertaken each year. The Council has been notified of a number of cases where an anomaly exists in that a reduction in income hasn't resulted in a decrease in rent. The Council has substantially progressed the 2012 rent review and has been advised by the Department that new Guidelines to enact the Housing Act 2009, as it applies to Differential Rents, will be available shortly.

Ms. Woods stated that the Council wishes to avoid a situation where

- (a) it would have to undertake a second rent review in 2012;
- (b) where a tenant rent could be reduced in the short term but following the new Guidelines could go up again in 2013;
- (c) such a revision could have major budgetary implications for the Council
- (d) the inclusion of a provision could, in effect, encourage the manipulation of the structure of social welfare payments to influence the level of rent payment.

“ Cllr Murray proposed, Cllr McPhillips seconded, that we leave the Rent Scheme as it is for the time being, until we get new national guidelines. In the meantime, we ensure that no tenant whose income has been reduced, will pay a higher rent ”

The Mayor put Cllr Carthy’s proposal to the meeting – a recorded vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs Carthy, Conlon, Crowe, B. McKenna, O’Hanlon and P. Treanor.

Total 6

Against: Cllrs Bannigan, Carville, Connolly, Coyle, Maxwell, McElvaney, McNally, McPhillips, Murray, O’Brien, and S. Treanor.

Total 11

The Mayor declared Cllr Carthy’s motion defeated.

The Mayor then put Cllr Murray’s motion to the meeting. A recorded vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs Bannigan, Carville, Conlon, Coyle, Connolly, Maxwell, McElvaney, B. McKenna, McNally, McPhillips, Murray, O’Brien, O’Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Total 15

Against: Nil

Abstained: Cllrs Carthy and Crowe

Total 2

The Mayor declared Cllr Murray’s motion carried.

7. To consider the draft Monaghan County Development Plan (Incorporating the Development Plans for the Towns of Monaghan, Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones and Ballybay) 2013-2019

It was agreed that consideration of this item be deferred until Monday 21st May, 2012 at 10.00 a.m.

8. To fix date for Annual meeting of the Council.

It was agreed that the Annual Meeting of the Council would be held on Monday 18th June, 2012 at 10.00 a.m.

9. To receive reports from Members attending Conferences

The Members noted the reports from Cllrs Bannigan, Carville, Connolly, Coyle, Crowe, Maxwell, McNally and O’Hanlon in relation to their attendance at the following conferences –

- Effective and Priority Management, Dundalk, Co. Louth.
- Environment Conference, Tralee, Co. Kerry.
- Local Government Seminar, Limerick.

- Guide to Septic Systems, Galway.
- 2012 Urban Wastewater Discharges, Kilmurry, Limerick
- Economic development in the regions, Ennistymon, Co. Clare.
- The rise of the creative individual, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
- Help busy Councillors become effective leaders, Westport, Co. Mayo
- Colmcille Winter School (Tourism) Gartan, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal

10. Proposed Eirgrid 440kv Interconnector

The Mayor referred to the visit to the National Control Centre on Wednesday 9th May by the members of the EirGrid Sub Committee.

11. Business submitted by County Manager:

Ulster Canal:

The Manager circulated an update to the Members in relation to the current status of the Ulster Canal planning application. The Council has been in contact with the Planning Service of Northern Ireland and its submission is awaited.

Continuation of Membership – Cllr Sheila McKenna:

The Meetings Administrator advised the members that in accordance with the Local Government Act, 2001, it is necessary that the Council pass a resolution extending the term of office of Cllr Sheila McKenna for a period of six months on ill health grounds.

On the proposal of Cllr B. McKenna, seconded by Cllr H. McElvaney it was unanimously agreed that the term of office of Cllr Sheila McKenna, Carrachor, Scotstown, be extended for a period of six months on ill health grounds.

All present extended their good wishes to Cllr McKenna.

12. Matters arising out of minutes of Council meeting held on 2nd April, 2012.

Consideration of this item was deferred until the adjourned meeting on Monday 21st May, 2012.

13. To receive presentation from Connect Ireland

The Mayor welcomed Mr. Alan Gallagher, Business Development Manager, Connect Ireland and invited him to address the Council.

Mr. Gallagher thanked the members and the Acting County Manager for the opportunity to address the meeting.

Mr. Gallagher explained that Connect Ireland was appointed by the Irish Government and IDA Ireland to deliver the ‘Succeed in Ireland’ initiative which is part of the Government’s 2012 Action Plan for Jobs. Connect Ireland is an innovative way to create new jobs in Ireland by harnessing the power of global connections. Its mission is to attract companies that are expanding internationally so they locate in Ireland and create new jobs in the Irish economy.

The Succeed in Ireland Initiative targets new foreign direct investment (FDI) job opportunities with a view to creating 5000 jobs. It makes introductions to potential foreign investors to the idea of investing in Ireland and people can receive rewards when a company they have ‘connected’ invests in Ireland and creates jobs. A minimum of €1,500 is payable for every job created subject to a minimum of 3 jobs and a maximum of 100 jobs.

He stated that Ireland is a very attractive location for international investors – Corporation tax is the lowest in Europe at 12.5%. There is an availability of talent; Ireland is a member of the EU and is in the Euro zone and it is the only English speaking country in the Euro zone.

He asked the Members to spread the word locally and internationally and to promote the initiative both locally and internationally and that the Council would take a business development approach where it would –

- Create a value package that sells the county
- Have links from the Council website to the Connect Ireland website
- Have the Connect Ireland and County Monaghan’s value package brochures available on line.

Mr. Gallagher then responded to queries from the Members.

The Mayor thanked Mr. Gallagher on behalf of the Council for a very energetic and enlightening presentation and assured him of the Council’s support and co-operation.

14. Questions:

Cllr B. McKenna asked:

1. In situations where Monaghan County Council removed hedges/ditches on dangerous bends and erected chain-link type fencing, who is responsible for the maintenance and/or repair of such fencing?

Reply: *The responsibility for the maintenance of such fencing is with the landowner unless in the case of certain national road schemes where the agreement entered into between the Irish Farmer’s Association and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in 2001, applies.*

Cllr B. McKenna asked:

2. In view of the number of accidents and near misses at the junction known as Brennan's Cross on the Tydavnet road to Scotstown, will the Council examine what remedial measures it might take in order to make this junction safe for road users and those using the dwelling adjacent to the crossroads.

Reply: *The Council will examine this junction to ascertain if appropriate measures could be included in an application for funding to the Department of Tourism and Transport under the Low Cost Safety Improvement Scheme for 2013.*

Cllr G. Carville asked:

3. What is the up to date situation with regard to the re-furbishment of the Market House/Courthouse in Castleblayney? What is the proposed action plan in order to protect the building?

Reply: *The Castleblayney Enterprise Board carried out a structural survey and prepared plans for reconstruction work and a phased occupancy of the building. The Board is to submit a planning application to Castleblayney Town Council for remedial work in the near future. When planning permission has been granted funding avenues will be explored.*

4. Will the Council undertake any works at Killycard Manor Housing Development in Castleblayney, particularly the completion of public lighting (for safety reasons) and what is the up to date situation following communications with local residents?

Reply: *The ownership and responsibility for the infrastructure in Killycard Manor remains with the financial institution who has taken control of the development from the developer. The Planning Authority is in negotiations with this institution with a view to having the development completed to satisfactory standard. It is anticipated that a conclusion to these negotiations will be reached in the immediate future.*

5. When will public lighting be provided at Drumcrew, on the (now) regional road linking the Castleblayney By Pass at Tullyvin with Castleblayney?

Reply: *The installation of ducting is planned to commence the week beginning the 8th of May.*

Cllr C. McPhillips asked:

6. Between the village of Smithboro and the town of Clones, along the N54 there is a crossroads known locally as "Leonard's Cross". There is no filter lane for right turning traffic, when travelling in either direction at this junction, whereas such features are present at other junctions along this route, and I am advised that this has been the site of two fatalities in the past. Can Monaghan County Council

please advise who is responsible for carrying out works to make this junction safe and if Monaghan County Council will take any action in respect of this matter?

Reply: *Monaghan County Council will examine this location and include it as an item on the agenda of the next Road Area Committee Meeting for discussion.*

Cllr C. McPhillips asked:

7. There are currently road improvements being carried out on the N54 which are very much welcomed and I understand that diverted traffic is being directed via Threemilehouse village. Can Monaghan County Council please advise how diversion routes are chosen, for example is any consideration given to the volume and size of traffic which will be diverted, the current state of the minor road which will carry the diverted traffic and the subsequent effects on this minor road? For example, I understand that two Heavy Goods Vehicles had serious difficulties when they met along the Drumsnatt Road near Threemilehouse village. When carrying out works on National and regional routes, are funds set aside to prepare the minor roads for the new traffic they will carry or for repairs to them thereafter?

Reply: *Traffic other than local traffic is diverted onto the highest class of road available while keeping the length of diverted route to a reasonable distance. In addition local diversions for local traffic can also operate on the adjacent road network, the volume of which, would be expected to be much smaller. The Temporary Traffic Management Designer would normally carry out an assessment of the proposed diversion route and may specify additional signage or other measures to be installed as part of the diversion. The cost of such works would be included in the contract price.*

8. The Office of Public Works prepared a report following last October's torrential rains, which I understand became available to the Council in March of this year. Can Monaghan County Council please advise if the report made any reference to the flooding in Threemilehouse village? Can Monaghan County Council also please advise what works are intended to be carried out to prevent further flooding of this extent in the homes of Threemilehouse residents in the future? Can Monaghan County Council also advise if any reference was made in the OPW report to flooding in the Drum and Aghabog areas, in the area of the Bunnoe River?

Reply: *The Office of Public Works has not prepared a report on last October's flooding but is currently carrying out a Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) study throughout the Country. This study will identify and examine in detail the causes of flooding throughout various catchments and produce an integrated plan of specific measures to address the significant flood risk factors. The OPW have indicated that they intend to focus this study in County Monaghan on a limited number of high risk areas (Monaghan Town, Carrickmacross, Ballybay and Inniskeen). Representatives from the Council have met with the OPW and have advised them of the flooding that occurred in Threemilehouse. Notwithstanding this, the OPW have indicated that they will not be including Threemilehouse within their assessment. The Council will examine*

the area and liaise with the OPW to determine if an application under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works Scheme would be accepted.

Cllr S. Conlon asked:

9. What date will the Tourism Office, located at the Monaghan swimming pool, be reopening?

Reply: Fáilte Ireland has confirmed per correspondence dated 20th April, 2012, that Monaghan Tourist Information Office at Monaghan Swimming Pool will not be opened this year. (*“It has become clear that with significantly reduced resources, a number of tourist offices within the network are no longer viable for Fáilte Ireland to operate, including Monaghan, particularly as our staff member retired in September, 2011”*).

We are now seeking to support alternative models to provide solutions to meet the needs of the local tourism sector, particularly for those offices which we can no longer operate. As discussed, these include strategic partnerships with local voluntary and community groups, greater use of technology and new arrangements with local authorities.

Cllr P. Connolly asked:

10. At the January meeting this year Monaghan County Council indicated that the request to put rumble strips on the left hand side of the Monaghan/Armagh Road ahead of the turn off for Glaslough in order to improve road safety at the junction would be discussed with the NRA to examine whether the application for funding would be successful under the road safety improvement scheme, what response has the Council received?

Reply: *Applications for funding for Road Safety Improvement Schemes from the National Roads Authority are normally invited and discussed in the third quarter of the year. The Council propose to discuss this location with the National Roads Authority at that time.*

11. To ask Monaghan County Council in relation to the approved safety works at Knockconan National School/Blackwater Learning Centre, Ballyoisin what is the likely commencement date of the proposed works and the likely duration of same?

Reply: *These works are planned to take place during the school summer holidays.*

12. In view of the fact that a number of doctors have moved their surgeries from the North Road, which have been used by patients from North Monaghan area and surrounds, to the Standard office entry in the Diamond, and the fact that a number of the clients make use of the disabled parking bays have Monaghan County Council any plans to request the UDC to provide disabled parking bays closer to the new surgery location---- perhaps top side of courthouse car park?

Reply: *The Car park at the rear of St. Patrick's Hall/Courthouse, Monaghan is the responsibility of Monaghan Town Council. A request to the Town Council to provide/relocate disabled parking bays in this car park could be made by notice of motion/resolution of the elected members.*

Cllr M. Carthy asked:

13. Will the Council outline the progress made, if any, in the past month, on the proposed group home at Carrickmacross for women with physical and sensory disabilities? What is the expected timeframe for completion of this project?

Reply: *The Department Inspector's report raising concerns regarding the apparently exceptional retaining structures required was received on 28 March 2012 and forwarded to Respond Housing Association immediately with a letter asking Respond to address the issues raised. Monaghan County Council officials met with Respond's staff on 24 April 2012 to review progress. At the meeting Respond outlined progress that had been made with the Architectural and Engineering design towards addressing the issues raised by the Department. The draft Engineer's drawings were discussed and it was agreed that Respond will issue revised drawings for discussion with the Department in May 2012. It was agreed that a meeting will be sought with the Department Inspector to agree revisions required and to try to avoid further delay.*

The delay to date is extremely disappointing for all involved and in particular for those awaiting the construction of the accommodation. It is still expected that the project can be moved forward within a reasonable timeframe and it is hoped that Department approval to allow the Planning Application to be submitted will be forthcoming within the coming months. The planning, procurement and construction phases are estimated at 15 months in total commencing when Department approval to submit the Planning Application is received.

14. How many Council house tenants have been subject to a rent review by Monaghan Local Authorities thus far in 2012? Of these, in how many cases has a rent increase been sought?

Reply:

HOUSING AUTHORITY	RENT REVIEWS COMPLETE IN 2012	RENTS INCREASED FOLLOWING RENT REVIEW
Monaghan County Council	19	3
Castleblayney Town Council	6	1
Monaghan Town Council	338	94
Clones Town Council	90	32
Carrickmacross Town	97	30

Council		
	550	160
Monaghan Co. Council has commenced a rent review for 2012 for all tenants. This process is ongoing.		

15. When will the Council be in a position to carry out a full review of junctions on the N2 between Carrickmacross and Castleblayney with a view to detailing a list of proposed works to improve safety for road users at these locations?

Reply: *Applications for funding of Road Safety Improvement Schemes from the National Roads Authority are normally invited and discussed in the third quarter of the year. The Council will discuss these junctions with the National Roads Authority at that time.*

Cllr R. Gallagher asked:

16. With the cancellation, by the Government, of the Local Improvement Scheme, and considering the high number of private lanes in Co. Monaghan, would the Council consider developing a scheme whereby materials could be supplied to people on lanes in need of repair allowing Residents/Landowners to arrange the repair of the said lanes themselves until such time as the funding is reinstated?

Reply: *The Local Improvement Scheme was an approved scheme whereby public funds could be allocated to the repair of private lanes by way of annual grants.*

It is considered that having regard to the condition of the road network having been subject to a number of severe weather events in the last few years that the funds allocated in the road budget should not be diverted from the public road network.

17. In relation to the ongoing negotiation between the Council and those with responsibility for the Development at Laturcan Glen/Court/Way – at what stage are these discussions at and when can the residents expect that outstanding issues will be finally dealt with ?

Reply: *The negotiations between the Planning Authority and those bodies who are now responsible for the development are at an advanced stage. Costing for the completion of a site resolution plan has been forwarded to the responsible financial institution for consideration. It is anticipated that a conclusion to these negotiations will be reached in the immediate future.*

18. In relation to the current ban on Turf Cutting - could the Council set out clearly and identify the areas/Town lands where any form of turf cutting is prohibited in Co Monaghan?

Reply: *This matter is the responsibility of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, National Parks and Wildlife Service. Their website (<http://www.npws.ie/peatlandsturf-cutting/turfcutting/>) contains details relating to turf-cutting.*

Eshbrack Bog is designated as a Natural Heritage Area and Special Protection Area. It is located wholly or partially in the town lands of Barratitoppy Upper, Bragan, Corlat (ED Sheskin), Eshacrin, Eshnaglogh, Islands, Knockanearla, Knockballyrooney, Knocknageeha and Stramackilroy.

The government compensation scheme for turf-cutters in sites where continued turf-cutting is no longer possible for reasons of environmental protection applies to 55 raised bogs located in Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). There are no sites in Co. Monaghan included in the list of 55 raised bogs in SACs.

When contacted the NPWS stated that it held public meetings in recent years in relation to turf-cutting on Eshbrack Bog. Turf-cutting is restricted to landowners and those with turbary rights for domestic use only, using traditional methods.

Cllr N. Keelan asked:

19. What is the annual electricity cost to Monaghan County Council of our public lighting system; would it be possible to make some savings in this area, for example, by ensuring that public lighting is switched off after daybreak and not switched on long before darkness as currently seems to be the case in some areas?

Reply: Energy costs for the public lighting system amounted to €273,337 in 2011. Public lighting systems are generally unmetered supply and are billed on set tariff system, being a function of the wattage rating of the lamp, the number of burn hours and the unit electricity cost. Lights staying on during daylight hours may indicate a fault with the switching mechanism for example the photocell and should be reported as a fault to the Road Office or to Airtricity Utility Solutions, the Councils public lighting maintenance contractor.

20. It has been brought to my attention that in and around Carrickmacross town up to 10 water leaks have been reported in the last number of months but nothing seems to have been done to repair these leaks. Is this the case; if so and given the cost of treating water, is this not a waste of money?

Reply: Monaghan County Council monitor the network through a IT system called 'pmac'. Changes in quantity used/lost are highlighted through this system which informs the technical staff of any significant changes to the network. Operational decisions to repair a water main burst are based on several factors including,

- *Quantity involved*
- *Time of discovery*
- *Location*
- *Health & Safety concerns – public and staff*
- *Demand on network at time of discovery*
- *Available resources – internal / external*

The threshold of water loss is specific to the network in question and any decision to repair is evaluated considering all of the above criteria.

Following evaluation a timeline and decision to repair/ not to repair will be made.

Cllr N. Keelan asked:

21. Given that it is government policy to establish a Water Authority in the 26 Counties, will the Manager make a statement in relation to our excellent staff currently working in water services and their future employment. Will the Manager agree that the establishment of a Water Authority will remove this service further from the people and make it more difficult to have issues of concern raised and addressed?

Reply: *The Manager gave a comprehensive briefing to the Council at the February monthly meeting. He also briefed all of the Water Services Staff in February and outlined the situation. Water Ireland has been set up as part of Bord Gáis Eireann on a non-statutory basis and is to be set up on a statutory basis in 2012 or 2013. Local authorities will continue providing the service on an agency basis once BGE are the statutory water providers. The published time-table indicates that the transfer of staff and operations will commence in 2015 with Water Ireland being fully operational by the end of 2017.*

Staffing levels are to be decided by BGE and it is expected that this will provide opportunities for local authority staff to transfer. Staff who are not transferred to Water Ireland will continue to be employed by Monaghan County Council.

Monaghan County Council will continue to provide the service as efficiently and effectively as possible until the transfer of the service has been fully completed.

22. Am I correct in my understanding that Monaghan County Council own two Velocity Pothole Patchers; if so, how much did these machines cost; are these machines in daily use to ensure our road network is kept up to an acceptable standard?

Reply: *The Council own two velocity patchers, one purchased 12 years ago and the second purchased 10 years ago. The older machine was taken out of operation due to increased annual maintenance costs. The operation of the second machine is subject to an ongoing review having regard to health and safety procedures.*

23. In relation to Inniskeen village, when is it hoped to have some work carried out to the access to Deery Terrace in order to allow ease of access for bin lorries and other large vehicles?

Reply: *Subject to funding being available this work will be carried out at the end of the year.*

Cllr S. Coyle asked:

24. With the implementation of the new septic tank regulations:

- (a) Does Monaghan County Council have adequate facilities in place to facilitate the desludging of septic tanks & its disposal in the county?

Reply: *The table below indicates the capacity and available capacity of our plants*

Agglomeration Name	Actual PE	Treatment Plant	Plant Design PE	Present Treatment
Clones	3,100	Clones Waste Water Treatment Plant	4,500	Secondary treatment only
Ballybay	3,135	Ballybay Waste Water Treatment Plant	7,283	Secondary treatment only
Castleblayney	5,692	Castleblayney Waste Water Treatment Plant	12960	Secondary treatment with NR
Carrickmacross	12,000	Carrickmacross Waste Water Treatment Plant	12,150	Secondary treatment with NR
Monaghan	16,533	Monaghan Waste Water Treatment Plant	43,833	Secondary treatment with NR

The proximity principle and sustainability principle will be evoked as much as possible but certain plants may have restrictions imposed depending on specific volumetric/biological loading at various times.

- (b) How many registered contractors are there in Co. Monaghan to carry out the desludging of septic tanks?

Reply: *There are currently 10 registered contractors who have registered within the North Eastern Region. However the possibility of permit holders who received permits issued on a national basis working in this region exists, therefore the numbers of registered contractors nationally is much higher.*

- (c) What plans does Monaghan County Council have to meet the future demands placed on this local authority by the upcoming regulations?

Reply: *Local Authorities are awaiting direction from the department in regard to their specific role in the implementation of the Regulations associated to 'Septic Tanks' inspection plans. When this role is clearly defined the affect on resources can then be accessed.*

Cllr S. Coyle asked:

25. Will Monaghan County Council seek immediate safety improvement & accident prevention works to be carried out by the NRA at the junction of the N54 (Smithboro to Clones) - L20323 (Ramoy - Lismeagh), known locally as 'Leonards Cross'?

This is currently a dangerous junction for vehicles turning right into the L20323 due to vehicles overtaking - it has also been the scene of very serious accidents in the past.

Reply: *Monaghan County Council will examine this location and include it as an item on the agenda of the next Road Area Committee Meeting for discussion.*

16. Votes of Sympathy/Congratulations

It was agreed that the Council congratulate the following:

- Monaghan Ladies Senior Football Team on reaching the Bord Gais National Football League Final.
- Caoimhe Flanagan, Cremartin on her selection as the "Monaghan Rose" to represent the county in the Regional Qualifier in Portlaoise in July.
- Drumkill Rovers FC on winning the Cavan Monaghan Premier League Final.
- Aoife Bannigan, Eileen and Jessica Cullen on winning the World Under 16 Irish Dancing Championship.
- Bernadette McNally, Carrickmacross on being appointed to the position of Director General in the Office of the Ombudsman.
- Monaghan Girls Under 14 team who have qualified for the Ulster Final against Tyrone.
- Christopher McKenna, St. Mellan's Handball Club on winning the Under 23 'B' Singles National Handball Title.
- Scoil Bhride Primary School, Magheracloone on winning the County Monaghan Football "Sevens" for the first time.

17. Conferences

On the proposal of Cllr McElvaney, seconded by Cllr McNally it was agreed that the Council be represented at the following conferences by the members listed.

Promoting Authority	Subject/Theme	Venue	Dates	Members
A.C.C.C.	Annual Conference Of the ACCC	Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny.	10th -11th May	Cllr G. Carville Cllr D. Maxwell Cllr H. McElvaney Cllr J. O'Brien Cllr R. Gallagher Cllr S. Coyle Cllr B. McKenna

Conferences (contd):

European Union European Regional Development Fund.	Political & Civic Collaboration Programme 2012	An Creagán, Omagh,	17th May	Cllr A. Murray Cllr P. Treanor Cllr B. McKenna
Galway County Council.	Living Landscape.	Clifden Station House Hotel, Clifden, Co Galway.	17th – 18th May	Cllr O. Bannigan Cllr P. McNally Cllr PJ O’Hanlon Cllr S. Coyle Cllr J. Crowe
TGR Seminar	A Guide to Getting the Right Work Done.	Kilmurry Lodge Hotel, Dublin Road, Castletroy, Limerick.	18th – 20th May	Cllr G. Carville Cllr H. McElvaney Cllr O. Bannigan Cllr R. Gallagher Cllr J. O’Brien Cllr P. Connolly Cllr S. Coyle

Urgent Business:

- (1) **Notice in the names of Cllrs Coyle, Gallagher, McNally, O’Brien and O’Hanlon**

Cllr Gallagher proposed, Cllr McNally seconded and it was agreed

That Monaghan County Council requests the immediate reversal by the HSE of the ludicrous decision to close kitchen services at Monaghan General Hospital and at St. Mary’s Hospital, Castleblayney. It also requests an immediate meeting with the Minister for Health Dr. James Reilly, T.D., to discuss the ongoing reduction of hospital services in County Monaghan.

Urgent Business (contd):

- (2) **Notice in the names of Cllrs Coyle, Gallagher, McNally, O’Brien and O’Hanlon**

Cllr Gallagher proposed, Cllr McNally seconded and it was agreed

That Monaghan County Council seeks the immediate approval of the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar TD and the National Roads Authority to move the Clontibret to the Border N2 road project to route selection/design state. This will avoid the sterilisation of the huge amounts of land in the north Monaghan area and it will also allay the serious concerns of residents, farmers and businesses on the route. Overall, it will allow proper planning for the area in the County Development Plan 2013-2019

(3) Notice in the names of Cllrs Connolly and S. Treanor:

Cllr Connolly proposed, Cllr S. Treanor seconded and it was agreed

That in view of the fact that the cut in the rate of VAT from 13.5 to 9% which was introduced by the Government on the 1st of July 2011 and due to end in December 2013 and is now due for review. And the fact that the Minister for Finance has indicated that the scheme may be discontinued in December 2013, Monaghan County Council calls on the Minister for Finance to further extend the scheme and consider its retention on an on-going basis.

It was agreed that the resolution would be circulated to all local authorities.

The meeting then concluded.