

Municipal District of Monaghan.

Minutes of Meeting of the Municipal District of Monaghan held in the Boardroom, Mtek 1 Building, Knockaconny on Monday, 17th November, 2014 at 3.30pm.

Cllr. Sean Conlon presided.

Present: Cllrs. David Maxwell, Seamus Treanor, Paudge Connolly, Robbie Gallagher and Brian McKenna.

In Attendance: Mr. John Murray, Director of Services, Mr. Donal McElwain, Municipal District Co-Ordinator, Ms. Frances Matthews, Co-Ordinator of Municipal District Meetings, Ms. Bernie McElvaney, Senior Staff Officer, Dermot Deeney, Executive Engineer, Ms. Bernie McMahon, Staff Officer, Dymrna Condra, Tourism Officer, Superintendent Noel Cunningham.

Cllr. Conlon welcomed all to the meeting.

On the proposal of Cllr Connolly, seconded by Cllr. Conlon, it was agreed that the sympathy of the Municipal District be extended to Cllr Treanor and his family on the death of his sister, Ann. Sympathy was also extended to Ms. Carmel Thornton, Administrative Officer, on the death of her uncle, Seamus McKenna, a member of the outdoor staff; to Mr. Alan Hall on the death of his Uncle - In-Law, Harry Reid, Emyvale and to Ms. Bernie McElvaney on the death of her cousin Peter McElvaney.

All members and the Executive associated themselves with this vote of sympathy and a minute silence was held. Cllr. Treanor thanked all members and the Executive.

At the outset, urgent business was circulated to the members by Cllr. Connolly requesting that the issue of flooding in Monaghan be discussed. Cllr. Conlon advised that this issue was itemised in the Co-Ordinator's report and would be discussed at that time.

1. Confirmation of minutes:

On the proposal of Cllr. Gallagher, seconded by Cllr. Treanor, it was agreed that the minutes of the Municipal District of Monaghan meeting held on the 20th October, 2014 be confirmed.

2. Matters arising:

Cllr Maxwell informed the meeting that the number of pedestrians walking the bypass in dark clothing is extremely dangerous and asked if a warning could be inserted on the signage for the N2 bypass advising the public to wear Hi-Viz vests. Mr McElwain responded that it was too late as the signage were ordered.

Cllr. Connolly again requested a full report on the estate known as 'Cnoc na Greine'. Mr Murray advised that a report was submitted to the full Council. Cllr. Maxwell supported Cllr. Connolly's request for a full report to be provided at the next Municipal District meeting.

Cllr. Conlon raised the safety issues in relation to lorries trundling down Dublin Street. He suggested the potential for bye-laws on weight limits and requested a report on putting bye-laws in place for the next meeting. Cllr. Conlon also requested reports on the three rattling manholes in the town at Mc Carron's pub, Mall Road and Dublin Street.

Cllr Gallagher asked if a forum had been set up with IDA in relation to job creation in Monaghan and what stage is it at. Cllr Maxwell stated that the LCDC would be the forum for the IDA to engaging in this. Mr McElwain advised that the IDA had agreed to meet the full Council in the future.

Monaghan Tourism Strategy:

Cllr. Conlon welcomed Dympna Condra, Tourism Officer, to the meeting and said that he was not aware of this presentation when submitting his motion on a 5 year Tourism Strategy. The presentation was circulated to all members. Ms Condra gave her presentation and a question and answer session followed.

Cllr. Conlon asked was it possible for a Draft Tourism Strategy to be submitted to the members. Ms. Condra responded that the Draft Strategy would go the Corporate Policy Group and then to all members of the full Council. Cllr. Conlon commended Ms Condra and her colleagues on the presentation and on the drive for funding. This was echoed by all members.

Cllr. Conlon also commended Mary Beggan on 'Beautiful Bragan' night in the Hillgrove Hotel where Ms. Erin Bragan, a tour operator from Michigan was present. Her purpose to seek out potential tourist packages for our county was welcomed.

Cllr. Gallagher proposed that a letter be written to the Minister for Tourism, Pascal Donohue seeking additional funding for future tourism projects in the County. Cllr. Conlon seconded this and added that we have seen little development from Tourism potential, making reference to the low ranking of Monaghan in overall visitor numbers, and seeking additional funding for Tourism to boost our profile for marketing and promotion of our County.

Presentation on 'Legal Highs' :

Cllr Conlon welcomed Superintendent Noel Cunningham to the meeting. He added that the purpose of inviting the Superintendent is to enhance our focus on working together in combating drug abuse in our town. Cllr Conlon informed the Press that some of the presentation will need to be held 'in committee'.

Superintendent Cunningham thanked the members for the invitation and gave a comprehensive overview on the work carried out by Gardai in relation to drugs in the District. He gave statistics on the number of searches and successful prosecutions since October.

Cllr. Conlon thanked him for the ongoing and robust efforts by the Gardai, for facing the challenge and adapting to suit the market. A lengthy discussion took place on the issue of drugs and 'legal highs' and all the queries that followed were answered by the Superintendent. The members thanked Superintendent Cunningham for the presentation and his attendance.

Report from Municipal District Co-Ordinator:

Due to demand on time, the main issue for discussion was the Christmas Lighting. A request from The Christmas Lights Committee for funding of 5,500 was approved by all members and the Committee were wished continued success. This will be reassessed next year.

A discussion took place on the supply, erection, removal and storage of the Christmas Lighting 'in committee'. Mr Murray suggested that the members should seek a report on the total cost of Christmas Lighting for the December meeting.

It was unanimously agreed that the Free Parking period for Christmas should commence on Saturday 20th December to Thursday, 1st January, 2015 inclusive. Free parking will be after 12 noon each day.

Cllr. Treanor stated that there is a need for lights on the Greenway. Cllr Gallagher agreed but that funding is an issue and asked Mr Murray to pursue funding for this. Cllr. McKenna suggested that a costing should be carried out on this. Cllr Maxwell requested a discussion 'in committee' to discuss the issue of public lighting on the Greenway. Cllr. Gallagher referred to the Greenway and expressed how great it was to see the number of people using it.

All members congratulated Tydavnet on winning the All-Ireland 'Pride of Place' Award recently.

Questions:

Cllr. Brian McKenna asked:

1. In light of the fact that more of the timber fencing along the Clontibret by-pass has blown down, has a submission been made to the NRA to secure funding for alternative fencing that is much more robust?

Response: The Council have been in discussion with the NRA and intend to make an application for additional maintenance funding to the National Roads Authority in 2015 to address this issue.

2. In view of the recent Circular from the Road Safety Division of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in relation to Traffic Calming Measures, will this Municipal District consider making a submission to the Department to install traffic calming measures on the road from Lemaculla Cross to Cappog in Ballinode village?

Response: The recent Circular from the Road Safety Division of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport relates to the "Control of Vehicle Speeds in Housing Estates". The road referred to is the county road LT16102. The Municipal District will continue to monitor and assess the need for traffic calming on this road.

Cllr. Sean Conlon asked:

3. Regarding the unfinished housing development at Forest Walk, Cortolvin, what outcomes have resulted following negotiations taken place between Council's Planning Section and NAMA?

Response: The Planning Section understands that the loan relating to this development has been sold from NAMA to a third party. The Planning Section is attempting to identify the current owner of the property with a view to negotiating a resolution.

4. When can residents of the Latlorcan Estates on the Dublin Rd. expect long overdue remedial works to commence as per the conditions of a recent planning application. Will this include rebuilding of the collapsed walls at the entrance to the estate?

Response: The contractor commenced work on the site on Monday 10th November 2014 and the scope of work does include the walls at the entrance to the estate.

5. In the interest of enhancing pedestrian safety in the vicinity of St. Louis Girls National School, will this Council erect safety barriers along the footpath opposite the school?

Response: The railing is currently being fabricated and shall be erected on delivery.

6. In an effort to improve water pressure for dwellings along the Mall Road and improve supply efficiencies, what is the timescale for the proposed water main pipe replacement works on the Mall Road under the Water Conservation Stage 3 Rehabilitation Contract. A previous response to a query I presented last April stated 'tenders for this contract are being assessed at present and approval to award the contract will be sought from Irish Water in May'. Also, is there a budget allocated for the road overlay works required after the water mains replacement is completed?

Response: "Currently, Irish Water only have the resources to respond to motions/resolutions passed by the Full Council at their monthly meetings. It is not possible to provide responses to Council Questions from the 31 local authorities at their respective meetings.

Queries from individual councillors are dealt with via the dedicated Local Representative Support Desk which has been set up for this purpose. For this reason, if a councillor wishes to progress a query, we would ask that you advise him/her to submit same directly to the Local Representative Support Desk where it will be dealt with appropriately. This can be done via email localreprsupport@water.ie or calling 1890 278 278 and asking for the Local Representative Support Desk.

In this instance, the query raised by Councillor Sean Conlon in relation to the main pipe replacement works on the Mall Road has been passed on to our Local Representative Support Desk. They will respond directly to the Councillor."

7. In an effort to avoid risking data protection infringement regarding the request from Irish Water for the address details of Council housing tenants, will this Council seek permission from Council tenants prior to disclosing this private information to a third party?

Response: No the Council will not be seeking permission from Council tenants. The Council will be complying with any legal obligations placed upon it including the provision of information Irish Water may reasonably require to enable it to perform its functions.

Cllr. Robbie Gallagher asked:

8. In relation to the ongoing flooding issue in the Milltown area, which is causing great stress to the residents, can the council outline what plans are in place to address this issue once and for all ?

Response: Milltown is part of the Monaghan Town Area for Further Assessment (AFA) under the OPW Catchment Flood Risk Assessment Management (CFRAM) Programme which will produce integrated plans of specific measures to address the significant flood risk factors in a comprehensive and sustainable way. The project will examine all options to reduce flood risk, including both structural and non-structural measures. Structural measures would involve measures such as constructing flood defences or increasing conveyance capacity, where appropriate, while the range of non-structural options that will be explored will include such measures as the management of water levels and the introduction of flood warning systems. The preparation of Flood Maps for Monaghan Town are on going and the preparation of a Flood Risk Management Plan will take place in 2015. The Flood Risk Management Plan will take into account economic, social, environmental and technical factors.

Public consultation is scheduled to be held in January 2015 in respect of the Monaghan Town AFA and will be advertised locally and via the website www.cfram.ie.

9. In the interest of pedestrian safety in Emyvale what progress has been made with regard to reducing the speed of traffic through the village?

Response: The Council have contacted the National Roads Authority to arrange a meeting with their safety engineer in the coming weeks.

Cllr. Seamus Treanor asked:

10. As our near neighbours in the UK have put a moratorium of six months on all non-nationals receiving any welfare benefits, i.e. unemployment benefits, health services, housing etc., which means that thousands of unemployed non-nationals are arriving here every month to claim our easily accessible welfare system, what criteria does Monaghan County Council housing department have in place when these new applicants seek social housing? Are there checks on their country of origin, if they have a criminal record and have Garda clearance?

Response: Monaghan County Council, in common with all other housing authorities within the state, has to apply certain eligibility criteria to persons applying for social housing support. The legislation makes specific reference to, but is not limited to, eligibility criteria based on income, the availability of alternative accommodation, previous rent arrears in local authority housing and, in relation to the determination of the most appropriate form of support, any social housing support previously provided to the household. Also, while not specified in the 2009 Act as an eligibility criterion, European and national legislation on access to social security and welfare provision requires that, to be eligible for social housing support, a person must have a long-term right to reside in the country. The housing application form requires applicants to outline their place of birth, citizenship status and basis of stay. All applicants are also required to outline any offences that individuals have been convicted of.

Notices of Motion

The following emergency motion was submitted by Cllr Connolly:

“ That in view of the impact of the flooding caused by the heavy rain on Thursday 13th November, 2014 to traffic on the Macartan Road, leaving the road impassable both Thursday and Friday, and the court house car park suffering a similar fate, that Monaghan Municipal District examine ways of reducing the residual flood waters via pumping etc. Thereby allowing traffic free flow at a much earlier time” .

Cllr. Connolly proposed writing to the Department seeking additional funding to alleviate the problem. A discussion took place on the issue and it was unanimously agreed to await the result of the CFRAM study.

Cllr Gallagher expressed his disappointment at the delay in the CFRAM study. However, Mr McElwain reported that the matter is still being investigated.

Cllr Conlon commended the outdoor staff on their work over the days of the flooding.

“That this Council welcomes the creation of a County Council 5 year Tourism Strategy and seeks, prior to it being published, that a presentation of a draft document is presented to the elected members for consideration.”

Cllr. Conlon advised that this motion has been discussed in conjunction with Ms Condra’s presentation on Monaghan Tourism Strategy.

Cllr. Gallagher advised the meeting that he wished to discuss the following motion:

“That this Council calls on the Fine Gael/Labour Government to apply similar financial rewards to those in Group Water Schemes as they are proposing for customers of Irish Water”.

Cllr Maxwell seconded the motion. Cllr. Gallagher stated that the reason for this motion is that whatever incentives are given to the people in the town area should be equivalent to the people in the country. People in Group Water Schemes should not be paying more for water than people on public schemes.

Cllr. McKenna stated that the National Federation of Group Water Schemes have been working well, making progress and negotiating issues with Irish Water and asked Cllr. Gallagher to withdraw his motion.

A Vote by show of hands resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. Gallagher, Maxwell 2

Against: Cllrs. Conlon, Connolly, McKenna 3

Abstentions: Cllr. Treanor

The Cathaoirleach declared the motion not carried.

Cllr. Treanor advised the meeting that he wished to discuss the following motion:

“That this Council is calling for funding to install CCTV in Monaghan Town due to the rise of anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the town centre”.

A discussion took place on the issue and a vote by show of hands resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. Connolly, Gallagher, Maxwell, Treanor 4

Against: Cllrs. Conlon, McKenna 2

The Cathaoirleach declared the motion carried.

Cllr. Treanor advised the meeting that he wished to discuss the following motion:

“That we call on the Minister for the Environment, Mr. Alan Kelly, to introduce legislation to reclaim houses that have been left abandoned by the owners, have fallen into disrepair and have become a health hazard”.

The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Connolly. Cllr. Conlon stated that a Derelict Notice can be issued in these cases. Cllr. Gallagher stated that the Residents Association should write to the owner.

A Vote by a show of hands resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. Connolly, Maxwell, Treanor 3

Against: Cllrs. Conlon, Gallagher, McKenna 3

The casting vote by Cllr. Conlon ruled against the motion, therefore the motion was not carried.

Correspondence:

A letter from Superintendent Noel Cunningham dated 4th November 2014 in relation to “Legal Highs” and requesting an opportunity to meet the members of the Municipal District of Monaghan to clarify the issues raised by the members.

An acknowledgement letter dated 29th October 2014 from the Department of Health in relation to Primary Health Care Services in Monaghan/Cavan and Teach na Daoine Resource Centre, Mullaghmat and to advise that it is receiving attention.

An acknowledgement letter from the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government dated 29th October 2014 in relation to right to complaint to the Ombudsman regarding Irish Water.

A response from the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government dated 3rd November 2014 in relation to above.

A letter dated the 30th October 2014 from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland in relation to the legislation covering "Legal Highs".

An acknowledgement letter dated 31st October 2014 from the Office of the Minister for Justice and Equality in relation to an increase in Garda resources in the town to tackle drug abuse.

Congratulations:

Congratulations were extended to the Monaghan Harps ladies who recently won the Ulster Intermediate Final.

The meeting concluded.

Dated: 17th November 2014.

Signed: _____

Cathaoirleach

Signed: _____

Meetings Adminsitrator