

Ceantar Bardasach Carraig Mhachaire Rois – Baile Na Lorgan
Comhairle Contae Mhuineachain



The Municipal District of Carrickmacross – Castleblayney
Monaghan County Council

Minutes of proceedings of the Municipal District Monthly Meeting held in Castleblayney Library, Gate Lodge 2, Market Square, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan on Monday the 18th of December 2023 at 10:00am.

Present: Cathaoirleach Aoife McCooey

Cllrs. Colm Carthy, Noel Keelan, PJ O’Hanlon, Peter Conlon, Aidan Campbell

Apologies: Gary Toye, District Engineer

In Attendance: Carmel O’Hare, Director of Services, Damien Thornton, A/District Co-Ordinator, Julieann O’Reilly, Assistant Staff Officer, Sarah Moore, Clerical Officer

1.0 Confirmation of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr. Keelan and seconded by Cllr. O’Hanlon, the minutes of the November 2023 Monthly Municipal District Meeting, held on Monday the 27th of November 2023, were adopted.

On the proposal of Cllr. Conlon and seconded by Cllr. Keelan, the minutes of the In Committee meeting regarding the proposed pop-up pool in Carrickmacross, held on Monday the 27th of November, were adopted.

2.0 Matters Arising

Cllr. Keelan:

Requested an update on the damaged barrier at Essexford bridge and queried what are the plans ?

Reply – subject to available funding, it is intended to address these works in early 2024.

Stated that the lining and signing at Essexford bridge and junction needs to be reviewed.

Advised that the Dundalk side of the junction requires hedge trimming.

Further advised that the Killanny Road junction onto the N2 needs to be trimmed.

Cllr. Carthy:

Enquired if a site for the proposed pop-up pool in Carrickmacross has been established?

Reply – Yes, a suitable site has been identified and there is agreement in principle with affected parties.

Member of the press, Veronica Corr, queried if she should report on this subject matter, as the previous meeting on the proposed pop-up pool has been held in committee. A discussion ensued amongst the members whereupon Cllr. McCooey confirmed that it was fine to go ahead and report on the subject.

Cllr. O’Hanlon:

Wished to recognise the role of Robert Burns, Chief Executive of Monaghan County Council, in progressing the proposed pop-up pool. Queried whether Mr. Burns is au fait with the proposed site and requested that he is invited to the MD meeting when it will be brought forward. Commented that all need to be kept informed about the matter.

Cllr. Carthy:

Concurred with Cllr. O’Hanlon’s comments and commended the role of Carmel O’Hare, Director of Services, Damien Thornton, A/Municipal District Co-Ordinator and the Executive. Stressed the importance of this amenity and commented that it is clear that a future provision of a water facility is a worthy challenge.

Cllr. Conlon:

Advised that there is a sense of cautious optimism from the public about the proposed pop-up pool and stated that it is vital that the people of Carrickmacross and surrounding areas make use of it.

Commented that he is hoping to work with the other Councillors with a view to having leisure centre facilities for Carrickmacross.

Cllr. McCooey introduced the new traffic warden for Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Ballybay and Clones, Mr. Stephen Owens, to the elected members.

All members welcomed Mr. Owens to the Municipal District and wished him the best of luck in his new role.

Cllr. Carthy commented that the vast majority of people will be delighted to see a traffic warden in place for the towns and stated that it is a very positive preventative measure.

Cllr. Conlon advised that it is good that people know there is a traffic warden present.

Cllr. Keelan remarked that he has no doubt that Mr. Owens will take a common-sense approach and stated that Carrickmacross and Castleblayney are open for business, and we need to see a free flow of traffic. Noted that both towns have free parking and people must abide by the traffic by laws.

Cllr. O’Hanlon echoed that a common-sense approach will be used and took the opportunity to express thanks to Carmel O’Hare, Director of Services and Damien Thornton, A/Municipal

District Co-Ordinator for taking the initiative. Noted the importance of treating all towns in the county fairly and equally.

Cllr. Campbell concurred with the previous comments, noting that it is a difficult job and that the next few weeks will be particularly busy.

Cllr. McCooey commented that the members have been seeking a traffic warden for the towns for a long time and noted the importance of the press reporting the new appointment to get the message out there. The members don't want people getting tickets, but they must abide by the law.

3.0 Correspondence

i. Response from TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan

Cllr. O'Hanlon advised that he appreciated the prompt response. He noted that the new stops under review lie with the local authority and requested an update on same.

Cllr. Carthy welcomed the introduction of the 171 service, noting however that additional stops and more appropriate stops need to be considered. He commented that it is a good service but just needs a couple of tweaks.

Cllr. Conlon concurred with the previous comments. He wished to note the safety concerns at Corduff Cross and also mentioned that a small number of school children attend Dundalk. Damien Thornton, A/Municipal District Co-Ordinator advised that the initial stop points were agreed. The proposed stops list primarily lies with the NTA and Active Travel. The MD are awaiting maps.

Cllr. O'Hanlon requested that a sense of urgency is relayed to the NTA. There are a couple of stops which would be very beneficial and sensible to have.

ii. Response from JPC Chairperson re: CCTV update

Cllr. Keelan welcomed the intervention of Superintendent O'Connell and suggested that the matter is left with him.

Cllr. O'Hanlon acknowledged that Cllr. Keelan has been banging the drum about this issue for some time. He voiced his frustration at how GDPR constraints can cause delays.

Commented that Superintendent O'Connell is doing his best and that the benefit to both towns will be huge.

Cllr. McCooey remarked that it is unbelievable how long it is taking and hopes to see progress soon.

iii. Response from Active Travel Unit and NTA re: pedestrian access Inniskeen

Cllr. Keelan stated that Inniskeen needs a safe walking option and noted that a number of proposals put forward by the NTA were unacceptable to the local community. Cllr. Keelan remarked that the NTA's response seemed to be if you don't like what is proposed, you get nothing. Cllr. Keelan requested that the Executive liaise with the NTA if possible and it will hopefully be reviewed in the new year. Cllr. Keelan stated that it is his opinion that a pedestrian/cycle bridge is the best option.

Cllr. Carthy concurred with Cllr. Keelan's comments, agreeing that a pedestrian/cycle bridge would be the best option. Cllr. Carthy further commented that Active Travel is supposed to

be about encouraging people get out and about, but that the focus seems to on projects in the larger urban areas. Cllr. Carthy remarked that he has lost faith in the NTA Active Travel Programme and would feel cautious about depending on funding from this source. Cllr. Carthy opined that an exercise was carried out by some individual in Dublin with no clue about the local area and the River Fane bridge crossing and advised that community acceptance is vital.

Cllr. O'Hanlon questioned if anyone could say that the Green Party is concerned with rural Monaghan? Cllr. O'Hanlon pointed out the potential benefits to the Patrick Kavanagh Centre and Inniskeen football pitch. Cllr. O'Hanlon wondered if the NTA's Stop/Go proposal should be considered in the interim?

On the proposal of Cllr. O'Hanlon and seconded by Cllr. Keelan it was unanimously agreed to issue a letter to Minister Eamon Ryan, Minister Catherine Martin, Minister Humphreys and local Oireachtas members.

Cllr. Keelan wished to note that a meeting with our local Minister and TDs had previously been requested and asked that this invitation is re-issued, noting that the members will facilitate them.

Cllr. O'Hanlon stated that the only way this meeting will happen will be for the members to travel to Dublin.

Cllr. Conlon seconded Cllr. Keelan's suggestion but advised that he doesn't want to see issues becoming lost, noting that the letter is separate to the Inniskeen issue.

Cllr. Keelan stated that if the Oireachtas members cannot facilitate a meeting locally, we can then go with what Cllr. O'Hanlon suggested.

Cllr. Keelan commented about the huge amount of money needed for Greenways in the county and in comparison, the small amount of money which would be needed for the bridge.

Cllr. McCooey concurred with Cllr. Keelan's comments and stressed the importance of bringing the issue to the attention of local Oireachtas members.

4.0 MD Coordinator's Report

Cllr. Campbell:

Commented that it is great to be in the Castleblayney library building.

Wished to acknowledge the work the MD has done and to acknowledge Carmel O'Hare, Director of Services and Damien Thornton, A/Municipal District Co-Ordinator.

Noted the amount of funding received in the past year from the Government.

Expressed thanks to the MD team.

Cllr. Carthy:

Acknowledged the projects the MD are working on.

Welcomed progression on the bandstand and sensory garden in Carrickmacross.

Advised that the Carrickmacross – Kingscourt Road (Mac-Fab junction) needs works to let people know it is a busy junction.

Can lights be considered at the ball alley junction on the L4900 as it will become even busier once the community centre is completed?

The road off the Finger Post on the Ballybay road needs works – only the mouth of the junction was “permanently patched” – the remainder needs the works done as it was only patched.

The paving bricks at Carrickmacross Courthouse are uneven – very dangerous to pedestrians. Thanked the Executive for works regarding the lighting of Drumconrath Road footpaths but noted that some sections of pavement are sunken. If allowable, the MD should be looking at the concrete footway option.

Cllr. O’Hanlon:

Advised that a section of the Finger Post Road Cllr. Carthy mentioned is now impassable. Acknowledged that it is not great weather at the moment but stated that it needs immediate attention.

Commented that he was delighted to get the recent works done on Parnell Street but queried if there is anyway works/funding can be avoided in the weeks leading to Christmas? Queried why this money can’t be carried into the following year for Jan/Feb?

Wished to commend Gary Toye. District Engineer on his recent works.

Cllr. Keelan:

Concurred with previous comments made regarding the good works of the MD.

Wished to acknowledge the recent works re: the provision of public lighting at Lisdoonan and Inniskeen.

Welcomed the provision of signs and lines at Mannan Golf Course.

Bocks road needs to be addressed.

Reilly’s Cross and Corduff Cross need attention as they have drainage issues.

Commented that road maintenance needs to be looked at in the new year. We seem to be fixing the same areas again and again – it is not a good use of public money.

Cllr. Conlon:

Congratulated the Executive on the proactive approach used in the MD.

Stated that it is welcome to see the projects progressing using the sensory garden as an example – this project is vital for some families.

Commented that the future is bright for 2023 and mentioned the recent success of the Christmas Markets in Castleblayney and remarked that he looks forward to bringing it to Carrickmacross next year.

Cllr. O’Hanlon raised a point of information re: resources/funding for hot tar, commenting that it is not ideal, but it is preferable to patching. It is costly, but more efficient.

Cllr. McCooey:

Thanked the MD and Executive for the hard work this year.

Commented that the MD and elected members work well as a team and expressed thanks to the Executive for the continued support to the area.

Spoke about the successful inaugural Christmas Market event in Castleblayney and thanked all involved.

Carmel O'Hare, Director of Services thanked the elected members for their hard work and acknowledged the work of the MD staff team. She expressed her thanks for the members patience regarding the recent high turnover of staff and thanked all MD staff, including past, present, and new members of the team. Ms. O'Hare advised that she is looking forward to a busy 2024.

5.0 Q&A

Questions raised by Cllr. Colm Carthy for the December 2023 meeting of Carrickmacross/Castleblayney Municipal District Council:

1. Will the council consider adding traffic lights to the pedestrian crossing at the Monaghan Road end of McGrath Road, Castleblayney? Also, similar to the crossing at Our Lady's Secondary school, will the council consider adding additional lighting at all pedestrian crossings on Main Street, Castleblayney?

Response:

The Executive shall carry out an assessment of the pedestrian crossing at the Monaghan Road end of McGrath Road to establish/determine the need for traffic lights at this location. Likewise, the Executive will carry out an assessment on the existing pedestrian crossings on Main Street Castleblayney to ascertain the need for any additional lighting at these crossing points.

2. Has the executive made any progress in developing the idea of a Dog Park for Castleblayney?

Response:

The Executive intend to present the proposal of a Dog-Walking Park to the Castleblayney Town Regeneration Committee at the next meeting of the parties in January 2024. Pending the appetite for the proposal, the Executive shall set about identifying a suitable site for the dog-walking park and thereafter seek funding under an appropriate grant scheme.

3. What steps have been made, to date, to initiate a masterplan for the Convent Avenue, Carrickmacross, which should, as discussed at our last MD Meeting, include for the provision of a Campervan Park?

Response:

The Executive continue to explore potential sources of funding to advance the development of a masterplan for the enhancement of the Convent Avenue area of the town, including areas along the Convent Avenue Walk. In the interim, the Capital Projects team has initiated the development of a walking/cycling link between the Covent Avenue and Farney Street.

4. When is it expected that road surfacing works will take place on Mullinary Road and Mullinary Street, Carrickmacross?

Response:

The Mullinary Road is currently scheduled for resurfacing under the 2026 Roads Programme. Mullinary Street is not included on the current 3-year Roads Programme.

5. Has the executive been successful in locating an appropriate site for the Pop-up swimming pool for Carrickmacross and, if so, when does it expect works can be carried out to bring this project to the town?

Response:

A preferred location for the proposed pop-up swimming pool has been identified and initial discussions with affected parties have proved extremely positive. The Executive hope to gain agreement on the actual siting of the pool structure, at the location concerned, within the coming days. Once agreement is reached, the Executive shall contact *Swim Ireland* to establish a timeline for the installation of the proposed pop-up swimming pool.

Questions raised by Cllr. Noel Keelan for the December 2023 meeting of Carrickmacross/Castleblayney Municipal District Council:

6. What is the up-to-date position in relation to the negotiations with a perspective operator of the bicycle rental scheme for the Inniskeen and wider area, for clarity and in the public interest, when were the bicycles purchased, how many, and at what cost?

Response:

The Executive are awaiting confirmation from the perspective operator of their ability to secure appropriate insurances to implement the scheme. It is hoped to receive confirmation or otherwise within the coming days. 16 No. bicycles and accessories were purchased between July and November 2021 at a cost of €16,580 including VAT.

7. In the interest of road safety, what is the up-to-date position in relation to the trimming back and shaping of some large trees along the Donaghmoynne road, adjacent to Ascaill Dubh, given that some large vehicles are coming in to contact with overhanging branches which is a concern?

Response:

The Executive has engaged an Arborist to carry out an assessment of the trees along the Donaghmoynne road, adjacent to Ascaill Dubh, to establish the extent of allowable trimming works. Pending receipt of the Arborist's report, it is hoped to carry out these works in early 2024.

8. What is the up-to-date position in relation to the Public Realm Plan for Inniskeen village including a parking strategy? When is it hoped to see some works commence in consultation and agreement with local community organisations?

Response:

Detailed design, including the development of a car parking strategy, is on-going. Pending Part 8 planning approval, it is envisaged that works shall commence in Q2 2024. The Part 8 planning process shall provide for consultation with all stakeholders.

9. Will the council carry out a cleaning operation on the River Fane, adjacent to the bridge in the centre of Inniskeen village, given that large tree branches have become lodged in the eye of the bridge, will the council put in place a weekly inspection process to ensure that the bridge is kept clear of branches and other items?

Response:

The Executive shall arrange for the removal of the large branches upstream of the arch barrel once the current high-water level subsides. The Executive undertake regular inspections of the River Fane bridge crossing in Inniskeen Village.

10. Will the council apply for funding to carry out improvement works including replacing the wing walls on Corcrin bridge on the local road (L4540) as requested by local residents?

Response:

The Municipal District Executive has submitted the proposed scheme to the Roads Section for consideration under the 2024 Bridge Rehabilitation programme.

6.0 Motions

On the proposal of Cllr. O'Hanlon and seconded by Cllr. McCooey, the following motion was unanimously agreed:

"That a letter from Carrickmacross- Castleblayney Municipal District be sent to Mr. Stephen Smyth, Monaghan County Council Fire Services (Castleblayney Fire Station) and Mr. Johnny Nelson, Constable, Police Service of Northern Ireland, to acknowledge their bravery in saving the lives of Ms. Mary McAllister and Ms. Shirley McMahon, following a kayaking incident on the river Fane on the 18th of November 2023. Furthermore, that this Municipal District request Monaghan County Council to hold a civic reception in honour of Mr. Stephen Smyth and Mr. Johnny Nelson and subsequently nominate both Mr. Stephen Smyth and Mr. Johnny Nelson for the National Bravery Award."

Cllr. O'Hanlon described the incident and bravery of those concerned. All the elected members concurred with the comments and commended those involved.

On the proposal of Cllr. O'Hanlon and seconded by Cllr. Campbell, the following motion was unanimously agreed:

"That a letter be sent from Carrickmacross – Castleblaney Municipal District to the Sheehan family to acknowledge the 40th anniversary of the passing of Garda Gary Sheehan and that our thoughts are with you all at this time."

Cllr. O'Hanlon spoke about Garda Gary Sheehan (RIP), calling him "one of our own". Cllr. O'Hanlon informed those present that it is the 40th anniversary of his tragic death – he was murdered by the IRA, and nobody has been held accountable to this day. Cllr. O'Hanlon stated that Garda Gary Sheehan (RIP) will never be forgotten.

Cllr. O'Hanlon also wished to open discussion regarding a commemoration for Garda Gary Sheehan (RIP) in conjunction with the Sheehan family and the community.

Cllr. O'Hanlon remembered Private Patrick Kelly who was also murdered on this tragic day.

Cllr. O'Hanlon wished to acknowledge Cllr. Campbell's attendance at the recent service held in Carrickmacross.

Cllr. Campbell formally seconded the idea of a commemoration and spoke about the tragic event of 40 years ago.

Cllr. Conlon spoke about the work of AGS, noting that a lot of it can be unseen, until there is a tragedy. Cllr. Conlon remarked that there is a stand named after Garda Gary Sheehan (RIP) at the Carrickmacross football ground and that he will never be forgotten.

Cllr. Carthy wished to be associated with the comments and fully supported the idea of a commemoration.

Cllr. Keelan also wished to be associated with the comments and voiced his support for the motion.

Cllr. McCooey commented that is unthinkable what happened and offered to help in any way she can.

Cllr. Campbell commented that a plan should be put in motion asap.

Cllr, O'Hanlon stressed the importance of involving the family and community as a whole and acknowledged and thanked the members for their unanimous support.

7.0 Directors Orders

The following order was noted: CMX-CBY 63/2023.

8.0 VOS/VOC

Votes of sympathy were extended to Elizabeth Armstrong on the death of Gladys Armstrong (RIP); Bernie Rice on the death of Gerry Rice (RIP); Joe Nulty on the death of Jim Nulty (RIP); Noeleen McCaffrey & family on the death of Jemmy McCaffrey; Orla Russell & family on the death of Julia Mulligan (RIP) and Francis & Mary McGarrell on the death of Mary Cawley (RIP).

9.0 A.O.B

Cllr. Carthy:

Is a pedestrian crossing included in the Low-Cost Safety Works application for the Kingscourt Road?

Sought an update on signage for the Collective and Lace Gallery at Market Square, CMX.

Advised that there are issues with accessing the public toilets in the Glencarn Shopping Centre, Castleblayney – can the Executive provide any information / comment?

Cllr. McCooey:

Commented that we cannot put the onus on the Glencarn Shopping Centre to provide public toilets and stated that this needs to be put on the agenda – public toilets are needed on Main Street, Castleblayney.

Cllr. Keelan:

Stressed the importance of all to shop local, commenting that MCC heavily rely on commercial rates paid.

Wished to note the importance of fire safety, particularly at Christmas time.

Remarked that he is conscious of those currently suffering a cost-of-living crisis and also mindful of those suffering because of the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine.

Cllr. O’Hanlon:

Mentioned the integral part Carrickmacross Emmets Football Club play in the Christmas Day swim , which has been going for over 40 years, and stressed the importance of supporting it. Cllr. Carthy remarked that the Christmas Day swim is an international event.

Cllr. McCooey addressed all present and stated that it is an honour to sit in Castleblayney as mayor of Carrickmacross – Castleblayney MD.

Cllr. McCooey reminded all to support local businesses’ and to shop local. She stated that Christmas is a time for giving and asked all to support those who need it.

Cllr. McCooey spoke about her experience of teaching children from different countries, many of whom are refugees, and how she has seen many of their difficulties first-hand. Cllr. McCooey stressed the importance of appreciating what we have.

Cllr. McCooey remarked on the important role young people play in our society. She went on to speak about the many recent and on-going projects within the district.

Cllr. McCooey expressed her appreciation to the Executive for their support in the past year and wished all a happy and peaceful Christmas.

The meeting concluded at 12:25.

Cathaoirleach

Date

Meeting Administrator