

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

**MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT LOUGHREA REGIONAL OFFICES ON
THURSDAY, 22ND APRIL 2010**

LLATHAIR

Baill:

Cllr. M. Maher, Chairperson
Cllr. J. McClearn
Cllr. P. Feeney
Cllr. M. Fahy
Cllr. P. Hynes
Cllr. B. Willers
Cllr. G. Finnerty

Oifigigh:

Mr. J. Cullen, D.O.S., Environment & Water Services Unit
Mr. M. Lavelle, S.E., Roads & Transportation Unit
Mr. M. Owens, S.E.O., Roads & Transportation Unit
Mr. U. Finn, S.E.E., Ballinasloe & Loughrea Electoral Areas
Mr. S. Breathnach, S.E.E., Roads & Transportation Unit
Ms. E. O'Doherty, Exec. Planner, Planning Department
Mr. A. Raftery, E.E., Loughrea Engineering Area
Mr. J. Costello, E.E., Gort Engineering Area
Ms. A. Power, S.S.O., Loughrea Regional Offices

Mr. A. Archer, WSP, Consultants

Cllr. Maher welcomed Mr. Finn, S.E.E. to his first Meeting of Loughrea Area Committee. Mr. Finn thanked the Members and stated that he looked forward to working with them in the future.

It was agreed by the Meeting to take the presentation on the Loughrea Smarter Travel as the first item.

BRIEFING ON LOUGHREA SMARTER TRAVEL BID

Mr. Owens advised that a final draft for Stage II of the Smarter Travel Bid for Loughrea Town had been prepared and would be presented to the Members by Mr. Archer, WSP

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Consultants who were appointed for preparation of the bid. He explained that the bid would be presented to the full Council on the 26th April 2010 and the actual bid had to be submitted to the Department of Transport by 30th April.

Mr. Archer gave a presentation of the Draft bid to the Members and then asked for their comments on same.

In reply to Cllr. Willers regarding proposals for Church Street, Mr. Archer stated there were some improvements proposed for Church Street and it was proposed to make it one-way. Regarding Moore Street, he said that they would try and encourage the schools to use it as a set-down area; it was proposed to make it one-way; to improve footpath width to encourage school children to use it and to signalize the junction at Cross Street.

Cllr. McClearn stated that some business people in the town had some concerns with certain aspects of the scheme. He asked if this concept had been done in a town of similar size to Loughrea that by using this as an example would help alleviate some of the fears associated with the proposed scheme. Mr. Archer stated that he had had meetings with the Chamber of Commerce regarding concerns they had in relation to the scheme. He said the onus was on the Council to demonstrate to the Traders that this works. He explained that there were measures in-built into the system that assures that no further proposals would go ahead until the Council can demonstrate that the scheme was working. He said that if it wasn't working, the scheme wouldn't move on to the next stage until the required changes happened. Cllr. Finnerty said people's fear was that by the reduction of car-parking spaces that they would be restricted from bringing their cars into town if this new system was brought in. Mr. Archer explained that the reduction of parking spaces was not excessive and the plan sought to encourage and promote walking and cycling but if this was not possible, people would still have the option of using their cars. He said that surveys had shown that people who walk into town tended to spend more time in the shops. He said the plan was about catering for everybody's needs and to encourage it to a point that promotes walking and cycling. Responding to a query as to what happened if the targets were not met, Mr. Archer explained that funding would be drawn down on a yearly basis and the Department of Transport would be working closely and would be monitoring this. Cllr. Willers acknowledged that the Chamber of Commerce had a fear in relation to the reduction of car-parking spaces and pedestrianisation but queried if there was any way they could get them back on board and in favour of the bid in advance of the bid being lodged. She stated that they had to think of the common good for the town and as Councillors they were representing everybody and that the overall project was very good. Cllr. Maher said that the bid had to go ahead regardless of their support. Responding to Cllr. Fahy regarding what effect of not having the support from the Chamber of Commerce for the bid, Mr. Archer explained the chances of success would be weakened substantially. Mr. Cullen stated that the reduction in on-street parking was one of the main issues raised by the Chamber of Commerce. He said that the fact was that the vast majority of people coming into town were using off-street parking. He said that no Councillor or Council Official could give a guarantee that those spaces would be there forever. He said the choice that was facing the Members was do they do something that has the distinction of giving Loughrea a chance to become a town that was vibrant and environmentally friendly as distinct from other towns in the Electoral Area such as Gort,

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Portumna, Kinvara. Cllr. Maher stated that passing traffic has gone from Loughrea and they needed to develop Loughrea and encourage people in from the hinterland. Cllr. Hynes referred to the number of car-parks in town and stated there was adequate parking in place. Cllr. Feeney stated that the Chamber of Commerce have very legitimate worries as it was a very bad time for them in economic terms. He said throwing another variable into the equation was making it difficult for them to agree to change in these difficult financial times. He said the Forum had gone as far as they could go to facilitate them. On the proposal of Cllr. Feeney, seconded by Cllr. McClearn, the Members of Loughrea Area Committee were unanimous in their support for the Draft Bid for Stage II for Loughrea Smarter Travel Initiative.

Mr. Owens thanked the Members for their unanimous support. He said they were having some photo montages done up and they would be on display at the public open evening in the Hotel. He said that they fully recognised that the Chamber of Commerce had concerns and said that they had tried to counter these by installation of the triggers/measures in the scheme. He said that if successful the implementation of proposals would be carried out on a phased basis over the five years.

MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA MEETING HELD ON 15th MARCH 2010

On the proposal of Cllr. Finnerty, seconded by Cllr. Feeney, the Minutes of the Loughrea Area Meeting held on 15th March 2010 were confirmed.

Matters Arising from Minutes:

Road near Cregclare Crossroads, Ardrahan

Cllr. Fahy asked if there was any update regarding carrying out improvements on this road. Mr. Costello advised that he had met with the landowners concerned and gave them a written proposal. He said he would be hopeful that they would sign off on this and he hoped to have confirmation back from them in the next few days.

Weekly Report on Roadworks Programme

Cllr. Maher queried when the Members would get the weekly report on the Roadworks Programme that they had been promised at a previous meeting. Mr. Lavelle stated that he hoped to have it in place in the next few weeks.

Map of Electoral Area

Cllr. Hynes asked that a map of each of the Engineering Areas within the Loughrea Electoral Area showing the road numbers be circulated to each Member. Mr. Lavelle stated that he would organise this.

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Flooding

Cllr. Maher queried if there was any update regarding funding from the OPW in relation to the list of schemes sent forward for approval. Mr. Lavelle stated that the OPW had approved some schemes already but they were awaiting a further announcement from the Minister shortly.

Unspent N.O.M. Allocations

Cllr. Fahy stated that at a recent Corporate Policy Meeting, the Members were informed by Mr. Gilmore, D.O.S., that there was €900,000 unspent Councillors Notice of Motion funding. Mr. Lavelle explained that this was a culmination of Notice of Motion monies for the past three years and probably included monies allocated but not spent.

Backlawn Car-Park/Ring Road, Athenry

Cllr. Feeney queried when works would be commencing on both Backlawn Car-Park and the Ring Road in Athenry. Mr. Lavelle confirmed that agreement had been reached that the works would be carried out by the Oranmore Engineering Area Staff and it was hoped work would commence in the next few weeks.

Criteria for Parking Permit

Cllr. Feeney queried if there was any update in relation to the query raised at the last Area Meeting regarding the criteria for parking permits, in particular small goods vehicles. Mr. Cullen stated that he was informed by the Roads Department that if a person was using their small goods vehicle for both commercial use/private uses, the requirement in law was that they must tax it as a private vehicle. However, Cllr. Feeney stated that if a vehicle is taxed as private it cannot be used as a commercial vehicle. Mr. Cullen stated that he was pursuing this matter with the Roads Department.

Pay & Display

Cllr. Maher stated that a break-down of the income generated from Pay & Display for each town in Loughrea Electoral Area was requested at the last meeting. Mr. Lavelle stated that this information would be sent to each Member in the next day or so.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Litter – Loughrea Town

Cllr. Maher referred to the problem with litter in Loughrea Town and also that grass cutting in certain areas of the town which was not being carried out, mainly due to lack of staffing. He said that he had been approached by a voluntary group who were willing to do this work and asked if they would have permission to use the Council equipment to

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carry out these works themselves. Mr. Cullen stated that there might be an Industrial Relations issue about using the equipment. Mr. Raftery stated that currently the Gardener and one other employee were carrying out the grass cutting. Cllr. Maher stated that if there were areas that they could not get to, would it be in order for the voluntary group to carry it out. Mr. Raftery stated that grass-cutting in the housing estates would be the ideal area to carry out this work. Mr. Cullen also stated that litter-picking would be another area that could be targeted.

Referring to the opening and closing of the toilets at the Long Point, Cllr. Maher suggested that if a contribution was made from the Council they would open and close the toilets also.

Public Toilets at Swimming Areas at Traught, Kinvara and Portumna

Cllr. Finnerty queried what the position was with regard the care-taking at public toilets at the swimming areas in Portumna and Traught, Kinvara. Mr. Cullen advised that the public toilets at the Marina in Portumna would be open for the coming bathing season. In relation to Traught, he stated that Mr. Costello had sent in a recommendation regarding this and this was currently being considered.

Litter – Main Street

Cllr. Willers referred to the amount of litter strewn on Main Street and stated that many bins were overflowing. Mr. Raftery advised that the bins were emptied 2/3 days a week.

Sewerage on Bride Street

Cllr. Willers stated that representations had been made to her regarding a problem with a sewerage pipe on Bride Street. She said that when An Jardin Housing Development was constructed, a 12” service pipe was laid down as far as Bride Street but from there on there was a 6” pipe and in heavy rain this can lead to sewerage problems. She asked that this issue be addressed.

Culvert in Castlenancy

Cllr. Willers stated that a culvert in Castlenancy was broken and asked that it be replaced/fixed.

Flooding at Grangemore, Tynagh

Cllr. Willers stated that there was flooding outside Frank & Mary Burke’s house at Grangemore, Tynagh and asked that the matter be addressed.

Signs for Kilchreest

Cllr. Willers requested that direction signs be put in place at Westbridge for Kilchreest as many Lorries drive onto Barrarck Street in error.

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Cemetery Cross, Athenry

Cllr. Feeney stated that as a result of the construction of the N6, the junction at Cemetery Cross had gone from a crossroads down to three roads and a cul-de-sac. He queried if funding could be made available for improvements to this junction. Mr. Lavelle stated that junction has a changed priority and advised that it would require a lot of funding to carry out these improvements and it was a matter for the N.R.D.O. Cllr. Feeney suggested that the construction of a roundabout at this location would help sort out this junction and it would require land to be acquired.

Kilrickle W.S.

Cllr. Maher queried why this scheme was not proceeding and why Department approval had not been sanctioned at this stage. He stated that a deputation from Kilrickle was requesting a meeting with the Manager.

Mr. Cullen stated that the treatment plant for Loughrea had to be upgraded and without that proceeding Kilrickle W.S. could not go ahead. He said the scheme is still high on the Council's Assessment of Needs and they would continue to press the Department for funding for same.

Chrochnaigh an Cruinniú ansin