

## COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

### Ceantar Bardasach Bhaile Locha Riach *Municipal District of LOUGHREA*

#### Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Municipal District on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024

##### I LATHAIR:

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| <b>Cathaoirleach</b> | Cllr. M. Kinane                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Baill:</b>        | Cllr's. M. Maher, PJ Murphy, G. Finnerty, G. Donohue, J. McClearn, S. Curley, D. Kelly, P. Killilea                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Remote:</b>       | Cllr. I. Canning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Oifigigh:</b>     | Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services<br>Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer<br>Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer<br>Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer<br>Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer<br>Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer<br>Ms. C. Kennedy, Clerical Officer |
| <b>As lathair:</b>   | Mr. Enda Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

Prior to the Municipal District meeting, the Kinvarra Community Council made a deputation to the Members requesting the development of a long-term traffic management plan for Kinvarra citing serious safety issues in respect of pedestrians and in particular school children.

#### **Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Chamber on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024** **LMD2392**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District (MD) of Loughrea held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024 were **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Finnerty, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Murphy and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

The Cathaoirleach and the Members thanked the Kinvarra Community Council for the informative deputation.

Cllr. Finnerty expressed his dissatisfaction with the quality of hedge trimming in the Municipal District adding that the hedge trimmer is cutting too fast resulting in hedges not being properly cut, signs being damaged, broken and knocked. He stated signs at various locations

are not visible due to overgrowth. Cllr. Donohue agreed and stated hedges are being pulled and not cut, she queried if the Council is getting value for money.

Cllr. Kelly enquired if it is possible to request hedge cutting for areas in which it wasn't already being done, he said that signage near Lawrencetown is totally obscured and requested this be remedied.

The Cathaoirleach stated she is concerned regarding safety issues for cyclists and pedestrians' due to hazards caused by overgrown hedges. She said she is aware of children who cycled to school and got caught by briars. She stated, a full review of hedge cutting in the Municipal District (MD) is required and added if the issue relates to funding maybe it would be better to review the system that is currently in place. The Cathaoirleach said, she understands hedge trimming won't take place in Maree, Kilcolgan and Clarinbridge until after Christmas. She said a better solution needs to be found as residents are very unhappy with this especially having regard to the increase in Local Property Tax this year.

Mr. Haugh responded, elected representatives are aware of the position in relation to responsibility for these works. Four separate crews are currently addressing hedge cutting operations in the Loughrea MD. Hedge cutting on the National and Regional is being completed by a competent contractor who was appointed following the running of a public tender competition. He stated that interest in this competition is extremely limited and that the number of competent contractors that are available to carry out work of this scale and nature is in the low single digits. He stated works are reviewed by the local supervisors, but any specific concerns should be brought to the attention of the respective area engineer, he stated contractors are still on site and any issues can still be dealt with.

Mr. Haugh stated, he would be open to direction from the SPC in relation to curtailing hedge cutting and clarified that the Loughrea MD complete hedge trimming works primarily on road safety grounds and within current funding; Funding that could preferably be directed elsewhere. He invited the Members who have not made an allocation towards hedge trimming costs to do so and stated that budgetary resources this year are very limited. He added, hedge trimming operations will be reviewed for 2025 and stated if additional staffing resources were made available, consideration could be given to completing this task inhouse, Cllrs. Maher and Curley agreed this would be positive. In response to Cllr. Maher's query, Mr. Haugh advised that the Council already have hedge cutting machinery and hedge cutting is operated on a hybrid basis with direct labour and subcontractors. He added, to make staff available for hedge cutting duties removes them from other necessary works. Cllr. Maher stated, the Council should engage with farmers to enforce them to comply with hedge cutting obligations and the Council should acknowledge farmers who complied with such obligations. Cllr. McClearn stated, there is a skeleton staff in Portumna to get works done and additional staff would be required to take on additional duties. Mr. Haugh informed the Members that consideration of additional crews was not an option as hedge cutting operations do not happen in isolation and traffic management – generally by GCC staff – must also be arranged. It was agreed that this matter be discussed at Strategic Policy Committee level.

Cllr. Murphy stated he contacted the Department who clarified that for safety reasons, hedge trimming can be carried out at any time during the year. He enquired if hedge trimming is

commencing too late in the MD and suggested that the Council commences hedge trimming duties at the end of July. Mr. Haugh responded that GCC do address hedges - primarily on higher speed, heavily trafficked roads - during the restricted period, but communicate their intentions in this regard to the NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife Services) in advance. Cllr. Murphy stated, some landowners will not comply with their obligation to maintain hedges should the Council continue to do so.

Mr. Haugh stated, hedge trimming is continuing on the road networks, and he encouraged all Members to contribute NOM funding to assist in its completion.

Cllr. Curley stated he had met with Ms. Ann. Graham, Chief Executive, National Transport Agency and stated that additional busses will provide increased transport to and from Loughrea, he thanked the Galway County Council Executive Team for their assistance with this County-wide issue.

Cllr. Curley enquired regarding the installation of bus shelters in Loughrea. Mr. Haugh advised that in identifying a location for a bus shelter, consideration must be given to what effect this will have on businesses, he added there is currently a bus shelter on the Athenry Road, and it is anticipated a new bus shelter will be installed in Craughwell shortly.

In response to Cllr. Curley's query regarding the provision of CCTV in Loughrea, Ms. Flynn advised that the Data Protection Impact Statement and Standard Operating Procedures are currently being progressed, she added an Oversight Committee is also being established to manage the process. Ms. Flynn added, each Department in Galway County Council will be responsible to manage CCTV in their own areas, for example, the Environment Section will be responsible to monitor CCTV cameras at bring banks and clothes banks. She added, sites have been identified for CCTV cameras and the public will have an opportunity to make submissions when the project is open for public consultation. In response to Cllr. Maher's query, Ms. Flynn stated it is hoped that the process will be underway by Quarter 1 of 2025.

In response to Cllr. Donohue's query regarding door-to-door inspection to establish if domestic waste collections have been secured, Ms. Flynn advised that this is being carried out she added, the Environment Section is receiving phone calls regarding the submission of proof of collection receipts on an ongoing basis.

Cllr. Curley thanked Ms. Lowe and the Loughrea Regional Office Team for their assistance in restoring public lighting at Cois Furain, Loughrea.

In response to Cllr. Curley's query regarding the improvement of footpaths in Loughrea, Mr. Haugh advised that funding is not available this year.

Cllr. Maher stated he contributed NOM (Notion of Motion) funding towards hedge cutting, however hedge cutting was not done in areas he was concerned with and requested hedge cutting be done from Loughrea to Craughwell.

Cllr. Donohue referred to a recent briefing with the National Transport Agency (NTA), stating that it was very positive, and she understands the provision of public transport to and from

Loughrea will be going to public tender. She stated she was amazed to hear that there is no requirement to give public notice if ceasing to operate a public transport service.

The Cathaoirleach stated she had put together a proposal to increase transport on routes, including route 404, and understood from her communications with the Minister at the time that her proposal was supported, she stated she understood that funding was not an issue. The Cathaoirleach added, clarity is required regarding public transport for the Loughrea Municipal District.

Cllr. Maher stated that the Members put together a motion to invite the NTA to discuss transport issues for the Loughrea MD with the NTA, he stated that he is fed up with people being fooled regarding bus services in the lead up to the Christmas period as funding is not available.

#### **Flooding Update**

**LMD2393**

Ms. Flynn advised that Mr. Gallagher was unavailable to attend the meeting and he sent his apologies. He requested the Members to email any queries directly to him. Ms. Flynn stated that Mr. Gallagher will provide an update at the December MD meeting.

#### **Cathaoirleach's Business**

**LMD2394**

Cllr. Murphy stated he had supported the Part VIII Affordable Housing Development for Ardahan on condition that a pathway/cycleway be provided between Ardahan and Labane. He stated, all services are located in Labane which is a mile from Ardahan, he requested an update on the undertaking provided to him for the provision of the pathway/cycleway. Ms. Ruane responded that she will follow up with the Director of Services for Housing. Ms. Flynn stated that a commitment was not given by the Housing Unit. Cllr. Murphy stated, he was given an undertaking on the day that the pathway/cycleway would be completed in tandem with the Part VIII development as it was too late to change the Part VIII at that point. He stated this should be correctly reflected in the Minutes relating to that meeting, he stated again the Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services and Mr. Damien Mitchell, Senior Engineer gave an undertaking to him regarding the pathway/cycleway connectivity. The Cathaoirleach stated she will look for a follow up on this.

Cllr. Maher congratulated the Loughrea hurling team on their win in the Senior Hurling Final on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

Cllr. Maher thanked Mr. Haugh and the Loughrea Regional Office Team on works done to improve the traffic issue regarding the traffic lights at the Westbridge, Loughrea.

Cllr. McClearn sought clarification on how long the temporary traffic lights will remain on the N65 at Healthawn, he stated people are getting frustrated with traffic delays. Mr. Haugh responded, this project is being managed by the National Roads Project Office (NRPO), he added that any timeframe for a solution was more likely to be measured in months and not weeks but would keep the members updated on any proposed works.

Cllr. McClearn stated a wall was damaged by a recent storm at Tiernascragh Cemetery and asked when it will be rebuilt, he stated a lady unfamiliar with the area damaged her car at the location. Mr. Haugh stated he was not aware of this matter and will liaise with Ms. Flynn.

Cllr. McClearn enquired if there is an issue with completing the Roads Programme, he stated there are roads in his area still not done. He added, in years previous, the Roads Programme would never be completed in November. He stated, last year the MD ran into the problem with roads being left until springtime to complete. Mr. Haugh clarified, that the road referenced from 2023 was not on the 2023 Roads Programme but was a road that was announced in late 2023 when additional funding became available. The prospect that the works would be completed in 2024 was highlighted to the members at that time, and was an additional road not previously contained in the Roads Programme.

He clarified that the 2023 Roads Programme was completed in full, and which is also the intention with the 2024 programme. He stated, the Roads Programme has expanded significantly over the last 5 years as a result of increases to the budget.

Cllr. Curley stated he was in communications with different Directors to identify lands in the possession of Galway County Council, he said he thinks it would be a good idea to always have an updated map available showing what lands are owned by the Council and the purpose for which they were acquired. He said it can be difficult for Members dealing with Part VIII issues when they don't know what land is owned by the Council.

Cllr. Curley thanked the Loughrea MD team for works completed at the Westbridge traffic lights. He referred to a junction in Westport consisting of ramped areas and enquired if this junction design would be considered for Loughrea. He stated there are a minority of people breaking traffic lights in Loughrea and added people in wheelchairs are petrified when Members speak about turning off traffic lights, he stated we must be conscious of them. Mr. Haugh responded that the crossing Cllr. Curley is referring to in Westport is described as a courtesy crossing. He informed that some changes have been made to the lights at the Westbridge to increase the crossing time available to Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs). He stated the current system review is focused on improving the junction for all road-users, but any proposed future changes would ensure that the crossing priority remains with VRUs.

The Cathaoirleach acknowledged the good work completed by Mr. Liam Flynn in his role as Executive Engineer in the Loughrea MD, she wished him well in his new role in Galway City Council. She stated she is concerned as the workload will now revert to Mr. Haugh and Mr. Kennedy and enquired regarding the filling of the vacancy in the Gort Office. She expressed her concern regarding the number of Engineers leaving Galway County Council.

The Cathaoirleach stated she wishes to have The Greenway and Active Travel as items on the December agenda for the Loughrea MD meeting.

**Motion: Councillor Curley**

This motion calls on all Councillors in the Loughrea Municipal District to ringfence the additional discretionary fund of €1,025,000 that we are due to receive over the next 5 years from the increase in Local Property Tax for the purposes of match funding for a publicly owned municipal swimming pool in Loughrea Town.

**Context:**

**People in rural areas get very little value for money from the Local Property Tax, in comparison to the services it provides in cities and large towns.**

**Given that all 10 Councillors unanimously support the increase in the Local Property Tax, the onus is on us to ensure that something of serious value is delivered with the money. If the money is ring-fenced in advance, plans can be made in the coming months to apply for the Large-Scale Sports Infrastructure Grant.**

A robust discussion took place on the proposed Motion put forward by Cllr. Curley. The Cathaoirleach and Members stated the way the Motion was put forward did not follow the correct procedure. Cllr. Curley refused to withdraw the Motion stating he had given an undertaking to the Loughrea Swimming Pool Group to put the Motion forward. A Secunder was not secured for the Motion.

The Cathaoirleach and Members agreed to hold a meeting on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 9.30 am to discuss projects and additional funding from LPT to fund same.

Cllr. McClearn requested clarification of lands owned by the Council before the next MD meeting and the purpose for which the lands were acquired.

The meeting concluded at 12.33 pm.

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**CLLR MARTINA KINANE**

  
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**DATE**