

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Bhaile Locha Riach
Municipal District of LOUGHREA

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea
held in the Galway Council Chamber on 5th March 2023 at 14.10 pm.

I LATHAIR:

Leas-Cathaoirleach: Cllr. J. Byrne

Baill: Cllrs. S. Curley, D. Kelly, G. Finnerty, I. Canning, M. Maher

Go Cianda: Cathaoirleach J. McClearn, Cllr's. M. Kinane, G. Donohue, PJ Murphy

Oifigigh: Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer
Mr. T. Prendergast, Senior Engineer
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. L. Flynn, Executive Engineer
Ms. G. Byrne, Administrative Officer
Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer

As Lathair: Mr. D. Pender and Ms. E. Ruane

To consider and adopt the 2024 Annual Schedule of proposed works of maintenance and repair to be carried out in the Loughrea Municipal District **LMD2345**

The Leas Cathaoirleach opened the meeting by expressing sympathy to the Hynes family on the passing of Cllr. Pat Hynes. He agreed with the members to hold one minutes' silence at the Loughrea Municipal District Meeting on Monday 11th March in respect of Cllr. Hynes.

The Leas Cathaoirleach invited Ms. Lowe to present the Schedule of Works for 2024 to the members.

Ms. Lowe summarised the Schedule of Municipal District Works Report to the Members, a copy of which was circulated to the members in advance of the meeting providing clarification regarding funding allocations under different programme areas.

Cllr. Canning welcomed funding of €2,000 for the Swimming Area in Portumna and requested additional funding stating €2,000 is insufficient. Cllr. Kelly concurred with Cllr. Canning.

In response to Cllr. Kelly's request for clarification on how the €2,000 provided for the swimming area in Portumna will be utilised. Mr. Haugh clarified it will provide for grass maintenance and emptying of litter bins.

The Leas-Cathaoirleach stated that a key provision contained in the Plenary budget was €1 million for housing maintenance. He referred to the overall allocation to the Loughrea Municipal District, which he stated is in the sum of €655,000 to facilitate additional resources for dealing various issues. He enquired from Ms. Lowe if additional resources are in place. Ms. Lowe responded she understands that crews are currently being re-organised in alignment with the 5 Municipal Districts as opposed to 3 housing maintenance areas but that she will seek clarification and advise the members.

The Schedule of Municipal District Works for the Loughrea Municipal District was proposed by Cllr. Canning and seconded by Cllr. Curley.

The Leas Cathaoirleach invited Ms. Lowe to present the 2024 Roads Programme to the members.

Ms. Lowe commenced by advising Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) made an allocation of just under €18 million in funding to Galway County Council, she clarified that the reduction in TII funding from 2023 results from the Moycullen Bypass having been completed in 2023 and therefore no further construction funds are required on this scheme.

Ms. Lowe presented an overview of the Annual Road Programme for 2024 for the Loughrea Municipal District (MD) and advised the members that the roads network in Galway County comprises 6,941 kilometres comprising Motorways, National Primary and Secondary Roads, Regional and Local Roads. She stated that the Annual Roads Programme is concerned with the maintenance and improvement of the Public Road Network. Ms. Lowe clarified for the members the various types of works which the funding will cover. She thanked Mr. Haugh and his team for their work in preparing the Roads Programme and the members for their contributions.

The Leas-Cathaoirleach and members thanked Ms. Lowe for her presentation.

Mr. Haugh thanked Mr. Flynn, Executive Engineer (EE), Mr. Kennedy, EE, Mr. M. Duane, Mr. S. Gavin, outdoor staff, and the administration team for their contribution in the preparation of the 2024 Roads Programme and Schedule of MD Works and for their work in achieving the targets set out in the 2023 plan.

Cllr. Curley stated that it is only possible to complete so much work with resources available, he acknowledged the work achieved by the Loughrea MD team. He asked if attention could be paid to resurfaced roads which are breaking up due to recent weather conditions.

Cllr. Murphy stated some roads have deteriorated beyond repair and asked if consideration should be given to the provision of a contingency fund.

Cllr. Maher stated that all Councillors would like to have all roads improved. He stated, due to limited resources only certain roads can be included in the programme. He thanked the Municipal District Team for their continued work and stated that a new 3-year plan will be prepared in 2024.

Cllr. Donohue raised concerns regarding roads which were recently resurfaced but require repairs again, she asked why they were not done right the first-time having regard to the cost to have them fixed. She questioned if the Council is getting value for money on roads which have been done. She thanked the staff for their work.

Cllr. Kinane expressed her disappointment at the reduction in funding for drainage issues, she stated this is a major problem and asked why the Department has given less money for drainage as, she stated, the climate is causing roads to deteriorate. She asked if a request for additional funding for drainage could be submitted to the Department to repair roads damaged in the last few months due to adverse weather conditions and requested the support for the Councillors on this. Cllr. Kinane also raised concerns regarding water run-off from private dwellings/property onto public roads and asked to have this flagged by the Planning Department going forward. Ms. Lowe clarified that a standard condition is usually attached to all planning permissions requiring applicants to make provision for roadside drainage, however, she stated this condition may not be attached to older properties in which case the Council try to deal with these issues on an individual basis.

The Cathaoirleach stated that the 'bottom line' is that the Loughrea MD is not getting enough funding for the length of roads contained in the MD. He stated any individual Councillor could nominate roads to use up the entire funding and it is impossible for Engineering and Technical staff to spread it around. He stated he cannot understand how the Council got only €500,000 extra considering how bad the winter conditions were and the damage done, he stated the roads were left in appalling condition. He stated the Council needs to look for further funding without delay adding a meeting with the Minister or Táiniste is needed.

Cllr. Kelly agreed that the Loughrea MD has not been given enough funding. He referred to three roads he was on recently which are undriveable, adding that this is going to continue for the foreseeable future.

Cllr. Kelly stated that the footpath near St. Dymphna's Centre, Portumna, which is a centre for vulnerable people, is in a terrible condition and urgently needs attention.

Cllr. Finnerty stated he has never witnessed roads in such bad condition and repeated that funding is a very serious issue. He listed regional, local, and tertiary roads within his electoral area which urgently need repair and concurred that each Councillor should contact the Minister emphasising the need for additional funding.

Cllr. Canning stated, while the Loughrea MD may have received the highest amount of funding, regard must be given to the fact that this MD has the highest kilometres of road in the County. He sought clarification on why funding has not been made for bridges within the MD and referred specifically to Oxgrove bridge. Mr. Prendergast stated that funding for bridges is allocated on an assessment of needs basis, he assured Cllr. Canning that next year

funding provided to the MD in respect of bridge maintenance will be greater. Cllr. Murphy stated he cannot understand how funding for Derreen Bridge has not been provided for. Cllr. Canning stated he does not know why there is a problem providing adequate numbers of staffing. He urged the Councillors, to look for additional funding when presented with the 2025 budget. Cllr. Donohue agreed that additional staffing resources are needed in the MD to assist current staff and Elected Members.

Cllr. Byrne acknowledged the high standard of work done by the staff with respect to the completing the Roads Programme and stated he has concerns regarding works that are outsourced. He stated that enough attention is not paid to pothole repairs and opening water tables and suggested that a dedicated maintenance team should be put in place.

Mr. Haugh clarified that due to the large network of roads in the MD it is not possible to maintain water tables on an ongoing basis. Cllr. Byrne stated the Council needs to ensure preventative maintenance of roads and not reactionary adding a crew should be available in each MD to deal with preventative maintenance. Mr. Haugh responded that he would also like to see a crew appointed specifically to deal with maintenance issues but that the existing resources did not allow for this. Ms. Lowe agreed that workforce planning is being reviewed and requests have been made for additional staff. She added that staff from Water Services who do not intend to move to Uisce Eireann have begun to transfer across to the Roads team and this is very welcome. She agreed that maintaining roads can be challenging and funding is an ongoing issue for the Local Authority.

Ms. Lowe responded that additional funding would be welcome and acknowledged there is a lot more work that the team would like to do. She stated adverse weather conditions has had a negative impact on road maintenance to date adding that a specific fund has been introduced over recent years to deal with climate change due to its impact, and this facilitates additional work on raising of roads, road repairs and drainage.

Mr. Haugh advised the Members that the Council policy for several years has been to upgrade the materials used in road reconstruction. This is evident on the National, Regional and Local Primary routes and given time will result in an improved road network at all levels.

The 2024 Roads Programme was proposed by Cllr. Finnerty and seconded by Cllr. Maher.

The meeting concluded at 3.06 p.m.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN



CLLR J. BYRNE

LEAS-CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MUNICIPAL DISTRICT