

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 Area Office, Council Chamber on 8th January 2024

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. J. McClearn

Baill:

Cllr's. G. Donohue, I. Canning, S. Curley, M. Maher,
J. Byrne, M. Kinane, D. Kelly

Oifigigh:

Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Mr. L. Flynn, Executive Engineer
Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer

As Láthair:

Cllr. G. Finnerty
Cllr. P.J. Murphy
Ms. R. Lowe

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in
the Loughrea Chamber on 11th December 2023** **LMD2336**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 11th December 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Curley, seconded by Cllr. Maher and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the Members and Executive to the meeting and extended good wishes for 2024 to all present.

Cllr. Curley requested an update on traffic calming measures on the Old Galway Road, he added a permanent measure must be implemented to deal with driver behaviour which is creating a serious safety issue.

Cllr. Curley acknowledged the works completed by outdoor staff during period of sub-zero temperatures. He stated Council car parks should be salted during period of freezing temperatures to make the areas safer for pedestrians, and in particular elderly persons and school children. Cllr. Kelly agreed with Cllr. Curley regarding the salting of Council car parks. Cllr. Curley stated, if the Government wants a town centre approach, then this is necessary

to make footpaths safer. He acknowledged the good work of the public in the correct use of salt, particularly at Station Road Car Park, Loughrea. He enquired from the Director of Services, Ms. Ruane, if it would be possible to allocate staff from other units within Galway County Council to the Municipal Districts during periods of adverse weather to assist outdoor staff with works critical to ensuring public safety. Cllr. Byrne stated that a Winter Maintenance Plan is made available to all Members within the MD and added additional isolated areas could be considered. He stated drafting staff from other areas within the Council would not be possible. Ms. Ruane advised that the recruitment of additional General Operatives is being considered as part of Galway County Council's Workforce Planning Strategy.

Cllr. Donohue queried why the elected members of the Loughrea MD were being asked to support the introduction of Salt Bins and other MD Councillors were not. She also stated that other areas should also have access to a salt bin. Mr. Haugh explained that the provision of salt bins was an initiative of the Loughrea Municipal District and was progressed initially based on the NOM allocations. The initiative has subsequently been rolled out to other Municipal Districts and it is a matter for each of those areas to determine how that roll out is managed. He stated that providing salt bins at other locations around the Municipal District will be considered but is subject to funding, availability of an appropriate location and availability of GCC resources to locate, monitor and refill these bins.

Cllr. Curley stated that the locating of salt bins around the MD was a great initiative, this was echoed by Cllr. Kinane who stated that she has received very positive feedback from the public, she enquired if salt bins could be located at Craughwell and Maree. Cllr. Kinane thanked the staff of the MD for making salt available to the public and added that the salt bins are very effective on keeping the salt dry and tidy. Mr. Haugh advised consideration will be given to the provision of salt bins at additional locations however he advised that this creates additional work for the limited MD staff as the salt bins require monitoring and refilling. Mr. Haugh stated he will liaise with the relevant General Services Supervisors regarding available resources to monitor and refill any proposed additional salt bins. Cllr. Kinane asked Mr. Haugh if it would be possible to affix sensors to the bins to send a notification to staff of when salt levels have reduced and need refilling. Mr. Haugh clarified that this was not something which was currently being considered.

Cllr. Donohue thanked Ms. Flynn for issuing correspondence to the NTA recently in which she requested a member of the NTA to attend a Municipal District Meeting regarding travel issues raised at Loughrea Municipal District Meetings. Cllr. Donohue expressed her disappointment at the response received from the NTA and stated that between the hours of 6.30 pm and 1.30 am there is no connectivity from Galway City to Loughrea. Cllr. Donohue added that, in the poorest of days, there were always buses from Galway to Loughrea. Cllr. Donohue proposed a member of the Local Link should be requested to attend a MD meeting to enable Members to point out the difficulties being experienced by the public. The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Curley.

The Cathaoirleach stated that the NTA have highlighted several significant projects in Dublin however, he enquired regarding NTA projects for the rest of the country.

Cllr. Donohue also thanked Ms. Flynn for contacting Uisce Eireann and for providing a response which advises that water sourced from water tanks should be boiled before consumption. Ms. Donohue acknowledged that Uisce Eireann displayed signage at IBC tanks advising of the requirement to boil water taken from the tank.

In response to Cllr. Kinane's request to provide a timeline for the appointment of a Caretaker in Renville, Ms. Ruane advised that this appointment is being progressed and she will follow up with the Recruitment Team regarding a timeline.

In response to Cllr. Canning's enquiry regarding the installation of a speed counter on the N65, Mr. Haugh stated that a commitment given previously still stands.

Cllr. Canning also sought an update on works to be completed on a pedestrian crossing in Portumna. Mr. Haugh advised that there was a significant fault at the pedestrian crossing and repair works had been carried out previously. He stated that repair works are scheduled once again but more significant funding will be required to carry out required additional upgrade works at the crossing.

In response to Cllr. Maher's requested for an update on traffic lights at the Westbridge, Mr. Haugh stated that, as previously committed to, an additional in-ground detection loop will be installed at this location. He advised that the flow of traffic through the junction was monitored over the Christmas period, and it was observed that there was a significant improvement with traffic flow at the junction.

Cllr. Maher requested an update on progress of works to take place at the Grove, Lake Road, Loughrea. He asked if a costing is available for the works and advised he is willing to allocate NOM monies towards the project. He stated that other Councillors who wish to make an NOM contribution to the project are welcome to do so. He advised that the facility is used by residents of St. Brendan's Nursing Home and the proposed works will make the Grove more accessible. Mr. Haugh stated that he will arrange a costing of the works which will be circulated to all Loughrea MD Members.

Flooding Update

LMD2337

Ms. Flynn advised the members that Mr. Enda Gallagher will provide a Flood update at the February Municipal District Meeting and members are welcome to send queries directly to him by email for response.

Cllr. Byrne stated if Mr. Gallagher circulated an email next week with an update it would be appreciated. He stated over the last two months water levels have risen to the high levels however turloughs will now start drying as weather has improved. He raised a serious concern regarding an area in Newtown where a wall had collapsed exposing a 25-foot drop into an area full of water. He said there is no barrier there to prevent a car from plunging down the drop and, if such an accident were to occur, the vehicle would not be located for months. He said that boulders should be located on the side of the road to prevent such an accident occurring. Mr. Haugh responded that he will arrange for the area to be assessed.

Cllr. Donohue stated that the underpass to the train station at Ardrahan is unpassable for pedestrians and cyclists due to flooding. She asked Mr. Haugh to have the matter investigated and to arrange for the water to be pumped away as soon as possible. Mr. Haugh advised he will have the issue assessed. Cllr. Maher continued that, at Gort Breda there has been a flood across the road for two weeks and water tables need to be opened as soon as possible. Mr. Haugh stated that he will liaise with the local General Services Supervisor to have the matter addressed.

Cllr. Byrne stated that several years ago works were carried out at Kiltiernan to Brandy Harbour. He stated that the area is now very overgrown, and the land is flooded. Cllr. Byrne advised that a few people have contacted him regarding this issue, and he requested vegetation be cleared from the location.

Cllr. Curley asked if a survey of water tables in the Municipal District could be carried out as there are several water tables clogged. He stated that where water tables are not open, and flooding occurs on roads, serious road accidents can occur. Mr. Haugh responded that water tables are maintained as resources allow and additional resources would be required to carry out the survey requested.

Cllr. Maher requested an update from Mr. Haugh regarding flooding at the Carmelite Abbey, Loughrea which was preventing persons attending mass. He stated that the prior contacted him requesting him to follow up with Mr. Haugh on the matter. Mr. Haugh responded that he believed that this may be an issue internal to the Abbey Grounds and requested Councillor Maher to discuss this issue directly with the Mr Kennedy after the MD meeting.

Cathaoirleach's Business

LMD2338

The Cathaoirleach requested an indication of a date on which the Loughrea Local Area Plan (LAP) will be discussed, adding, a lot of people have issues they want addressed. He stated there is an election taking place in June, highlighted the importance of having the LAP dealt with in a timely manner but also raised concerns that the timing would overlap with the run-up to the election. Cllr. Curley stated that submissions can be made on the LAP up to 15th January 2024 and he requested Ms. Paula Higgins to attend the February MD meeting to provide an update on Active Travel which is tied into the LAP. He stated other staff/experts should be requested to attend the February meeting also with a view to providing updates.

Cllr. Kinane requested Mr. Haugh to contact the Athenry Office regarding a new zebra crossing installed at the Maree Road in October 2023. She stated a lot of mothers are concerned about the absence of flashing lights at the crossing resulting in cars not stopping to allow children to cross the road. Mr. Haugh responded that he will seek an update from the Athenry Office regarding the crossing.

Cllr. Kinane raised concerns regarding the viability of businesses in Clarinbridge following the effects of Storm Debi. She said that damage caused to businesses in the area is unthinkable and that the lack of correspondence from Galway County Council to those affected is shocking. She stated as a Local Authority we need to 'step up,' she said she was informed recently of another business which will not reopen. She enquired if a Humanitarian Fund will

be available to businesses and homes affected by the storm. She added that Minister McGrath needs to ensure the issue of funding is sorted.

Cllr. Kinane proposed a motion that, Galway County Council, A/Director of Roads and Transportation, Derek Pender immediately assign a dedicated member of his staff to advance the development and implementation of short-term flood measures for Bridge Centre, Clarinbridge, Morans the Weir, Kilcolgan, identified homes and road infrastructure in Ardfry and Tawin Island and that said appointee attend monthly meetings of the Loughrea MD to provide status updates on works.

Cllr. Byrne stated that the proposal should not be limited to the areas highlighted and should be extended to other areas in South Galway, he advised that 26 properties were flooded during Storm Debi, including homes and businesses.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. Donohue and agreed by the Members.

The Cathaoirleach agreed that appointing a member of staff as proposed by Cllr. Kinane should be progressed.

Cllrs. Donohue and Byrne requested an update on progress with the Greenway.

The Cathaoirleach requested Ms. Ruane and Ms. Flynn to advise the Members when a new consultant has been appointed to the Greenway Project.

Cllr. Donohue sought clarification on the proposed timelines regarding the Gort Area Plan.

In response to a query raised by Cllr. Donohue, Mr. Haugh confirmed that discussions have taken place with schools in Gort under the Safe Routes to Schools Scheme which involved proposals affecting Hennelly's Cross. He added that there is no specific timeline at present regarding plans for the junction.

Cllr. Kelly stated that an excellent job was done with the retrofitting of properties in St. Laurence's Field's Loughrea, however he expressed his dissatisfaction with a response he received from the Housing Department to his query and advised he will issue correspondence to the Housing Unit in this regard.

Cllr. Kelly stated that tenants of a Council property have dogs who are constantly 'yapping' causing a nuisance to other residents in the area and are in breach of the Tenancy Agreement. He stated that residents should not have to take the matter to Court to have this issue dealt with. Ms. Flynn stated she will contact the Housing Unit regarding the breach of Tenancy Agreement.

Cllr. Curley requested an update on the timelines for progressing the Loughrea Area Plan which he stated will tie in with the Loughrea Active Travel Plan and Loughrea Transportation Plan. He sought clarification on completion of the options appraisals which he hopes will see engagement on the provision of safe cycling routes for school children.

Referring to the County Development Plan, Cllr. Curley requested an update on the provision of a cycleway between Gort and Loughrea. He added, he is aware that there are pinch points along the route but stated that it should be a strategic objective of the Council to provide this route, the Cathaoirleach supported Mr. Curley on this. Mr. Haugh stated that he was not aware of any such plan for a Gort to Loughrea Cycleway but that a meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday in the NRPO and he will request an update on all Active Travel projects within the MD to be distributed to the Members.

Cllr. Curley stated that the lack of broadband is resulting in people not being able to remote work and said that in 2019 National Broadband Ireland (NBI) stated that broadband should be provided to homes within 6 months. He stated this was five years ago and the delay in the provision of the service has been announced in 6-month periods.

Cllr. Canning highlighted serious concerns regarding the number of deer roaming in the Portumna Area, he stated that he has received call from the public regarding damage to farmlands and hazards being caused on roads. He requested Ms. Flynn to contact Coillte requesting them to take appropriate action.

He added there may be a requirement to cull deer more often during the year and enquired if fencing could be an option to make roads safer as the matter is now very serious. Mr. Haugh responded that a National Parks and Wildlife Services meeting is scheduled to take place next Wednesday and this matter can be raised at that meeting.

Cllr. Canning praised the motor home park in Portumna stating it was full again last week and people were turned away, he encouraged having the area assessed with a view to extending the motor park home. Mr. Haugh advised that the expansion of the motor park home has been discussed previously however funding is required to enable any expansion.

Cllr. Canning requested the provision of signage along the walkway in Portumna leading to the swimming area, which he stated people are not aware of. He stated the facility would be better used if appropriate signage was displayed. He added if the provision of NOM is the issue regarding the provision of signage, he is willing to help. Mr. Haugh committed to considering this request and arranging for appropriate signage to be installed, if required.

Cllr. Byrne requested an update on the provision of a wall either side of Dunguire Castle stating that there are serious safety issues at the location. He stated that the Castle has been transferred to Galway County Council from the Shannon Group and it must be ready for tourism by the end of March. He stated that he included this issue on the Corporate Policy Group Agenda. Mr. Haugh stated that funding will be sought from TII towards the repair costs and an estimate of the costs associated with the required repairs is currently being prepared.

Cllr. Byrne stated that homes/businesses in Kinvara were flooded again during Storm Debi, he added that flood barriers were not high enough and suggested an application be made to the OPW for the installation of higher barriers to properly protect these properties. Mr. Haugh stated that repair work at several locations is ongoing and emergency funding has been allocated to facilitate these minor repair and safety measures. He advised that a meeting was scheduled between GCC and the OPW to determine if funding is available to carry out more significant repairs where required and implement additional flood protection measures that may be required in future.

Cllr. Maher stated that the proposal in the Loughrea Area Plan to close roads at the Courthouse and Londis Supermarket are causing huge issues and added, he is aware that people have sent submissions on this to the Council on this proposal. He stated that the closing of the road beside Londis Supermarket will have detrimental effect on the business and risk it's closure, he added the supermarket is providing employment to over 50 people. Cllr. Byrne stated the Chief Executive's report will be brought before the Members whereupon submissions can be considered, he added if the Members are not satisfied with the report, it will go back out again. Cllr. Curley added that all Members are being lobbied regarding issues raised and highlighted that the closure of the Old Galway Road is causing uncertainty for residents living in the area. The Cathaoirleach stated submissions can be considered and discussed at the meeting regarding the LAP. Ms. Ruane stated she will contact the Director of Planning seeking clarification of a date for the meeting.

Cllr. Maher stated that Ms. Flynn requested a member of the NTA to attend a Loughrea MD Meeting and the response received was very disappointing. He insisted that a member of the NTA needs to attend a meeting to address travel issues as it is impossible to travel from Galway City to Loughrea after 6.30 p.m.

Cllr. Maher sought clarification on the boil water notice, which is still in place for over one year, he asked why a member of Uisce Eireann will not attend an MD Meeting to discuss the issue.

In response to Cllr. Maher requests for an update on works required at the Kilmeen Junction, Mr. Haugh advised he has issued correspondence to the NRO and is awaiting an update.

Cllr. Maher requested a timeline from Mr. Derek Pender, Director of Services on the provision of a footpath from the Loughrea Hotel, past the Gael Scoil and on to Cosmona.

Cllr. Maher requested an update works to take place at the Town Hall in Loughrea and asked if a member of the team could attend an MD meeting to advise the Members on progress.

Mr. Haugh advised that many of the issues being raised were outside the remit of the staff present but that recurring items such as Loughrea Town Hall, Active Travel, the Athlone to Galway Cycleway etc. should be included as agenda items in future MD Meetings with staff from these areas presenting brief updates as required.

The Cathaoirleach requested that the Kilmeen Junction and Loughrea Town Hall be included as items on the next Agenda.

Cllr. Kinane stated she submitted a huge campaign with the support of everyone else for a speed limit review and, she added, her focus was on school safety. She stated Mr. Tom Prendergast did a lot of work in the area and should be invited to the next MD Meeting.

Cllr. Kinane stated that the NRPO have submitted a funding application to carry out a feasibility study on a cycleway between Clarinbridge to Kilcolgan.

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CLLR JIMMY MCCLEARN
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD