

## COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

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

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

##### I LATHAIR:

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|---------------|---|
| Cathaoirleach | Cllr. J. McClearn   |
| Baill:        | Cllr's. G. Donohue, S. Curley, M. Maher, J. Byrne, M. Kinane, D. Kelly, G. Finnerty, I. Canning   |
| Oifigigh:     | Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services<br>Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer<br>Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer<br>Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer<br>Mr. L. Flynn, Executive Engineer<br>Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer<br>Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer<br>Ms. C. Kennedy, Assistant Staff Officer |
| As Láthair:   | Cllr. P.J. Murphy   |

##### **Vote of Sympathy**

The Cathaoirleach opened the meeting by extending his sympathies to the family and friends of the late Cllr. Pat Hynes (Rest in Peace). He addressed Cllr. Donohue, a niece of the late Cllr. Hynes, requesting her to pass condolences to her family on behalf of all present. He acknowledged the dedication, commitment, and hard work Cllr. Hynes did during his time as a Councillor. The members in turn shared heartfelt sentiments and good memories of their colleague.

Ms. Ruane expressed sincere sympathy to the family and friends of Cllr. Hynes (RIP) on behalf of the Executive, Galway County Council Staff, and the Loughrea Municipal District Area.

A minutes' silence was observed in respect of Cllr. Hynes.

##### **Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Chamber on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

LMD2346

Ms. Flynn informed the Members of two minor amendments made to the Minutes circulated on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 to include two minor amendments were proposed by Cllr. Maher, and seconded by Cllr. Curley and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

### **Matters arising from the Minutes**

Cllr. Finnerty stated potholes have been filled along the R380 and in Gort town, but he is not satisfied with the method used.

Mr. Haugh advised that works are complete, and the standard of workmanship will be reviewed in the coming days.

Mr. Haugh responded to Cllr. Maher's request for an update on works planned for the Westbridge, Loughrea advising that a date for commencement of works is presently awaited from the appointed contractor.

Cllr. Maher welcomed Mr. J Greally from the Local Link Office in Loughrea stating the Loughrea Municipal District needs a fit-for-purpose bus service.

Cllr. Donohue stated that Ms. Marketa Quinn gave a petition regarding speed limits outside the St. Thomas's National School to Mr. Pendergast, Senior Engineer at the February MD Meeting. She requested that Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Prendergast visit the area at peak times to assess footfall and traffic volumes. In response, Mr. Gallagher confirmed that a full seven-day speed count had been undertaken at St. Thomas's National School on the Gort Road and that this would be used to inform the speed limit proposals for the location. Mr. Gallagher confirmed that the petitioners from the school could be directed to himself or Mr. Prendergast if further discussions were required.

Cllr. Canning referred to the ongoing lack of parking facilities at Gortanumera School adding the school is located at a crossroads which presents safety issues at peak hours. In response, Mr. Gallagher stated that he would speak to Cllr Canning after the meeting in this regard.

Cllr. Curley enquired if the results of the traffic survey on the Old Galway Road will be available before the Local Area Plan (LAP) is finalised. Mr. Haugh stated that a review will be carried out and circulated to all Councillors once complete. In response to Cllr. Curley's request for clarification on the use of CCTV footage, Ms. Ruane stated that codes of practice are now in place for the use of CCTV footage. A body of work will have to be completed before it can be implemented including Data Protection Impact Statements for all sites. Cllr. Curley referenced lands owned by the Council at the old Gaelscoil in Loughrea being used as a dumping ground. Cllr. Curley committed to furnishing the Environment Department with more details of illegal dumping areas.

Cllr. Kinane stated she is not aware of any legal impediments which prevents the Members exercising reserved functions for the setting of speed limit byelaws within the MD. She stated it should be tested and there is no requirement to wait for Central Government's decision. She stated she understands that a review of speed limits is taking place country-wide and referred to a response she received from Mr. Prendergast of 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 which sets out

the procedure for proposing amendments to speed limits and the period for public response. She said she raised issues regarding setting of speed limits over 18 months ago and a decision has not been reached.

In response to queries from Cllr Kinane, Mr. Gallagher confirmed that the completion of the speed limit review was suspended pending the introduction of the new Road Traffic Bill, as the new laws would likely have a significant impact on countywide speed limit proposals. The Bill was scheduled to be passed into law in Q1 of 2024. No further update had been received from the Department. In the meantime, works will continue on the submissions received. Mr. Gallagher explained that the review of submissions had been broken in to four separate headings, due to the volume of submissions received. speed limits at schools are one heading. When completed, the sections would be combined into one set of proposals that will be presented to the Councillors and the public. The Cathaoirleach stated that the Members shared Cllr. Kinane's frustration regarding this issue.

#### **Flooding Update**

**LMD2347**

Mr. Gallagher confirmed that the final EIAR and NIS documents had not yet been submitted to the OPW. The amount of work to be undertaken following acceptance of the weirs proposals by the Environmental team had been underestimated. The Engineering team are reviewing ground investigation data at the weir locations, preparing detailed design documents, preparing construction method statements, and confirming proposed access routes to the structures. Modelling is also being closed out to allow the completion of the EIAR documentation. These works are scheduled to be completed in a week's time with the EIAR and NIS being forwarded to the OPW for review in three weeks.

Discussions will be held with the OPW in the next fortnight with regards to the timing of the Public Exhibition. The works are being advanced through the OPW's Arterial Drainage Act and they are best placed to advise on the exact scheduling of the Exhibition.

Following on from the last MD meeting, the AA Screening for the proposed works at Killeenaran, on the Kiltiernan to Ballinderreen flood relief channel, has been completed. The works are to proceed as soon as the land dries up sufficiently to allow plant to access the channel. The lands are currently saturated.

The OPW has allocated the required funding for the Council to procure a study of the effects of Storm Debi on the coastline from Oranmore to Kinvarra. Works have commenced on the contract documents, and we expect to go to tender before the end of March. There will be consultation with the OPW before the tender documents are issued, to ensure the final report is sufficiently detailed to allow the Council access fund for works identified.

In response to a query from Cllr Kinnane, Mr. Gallagher confirmed that the current funding allocation related to properties damaged during Storm Debi and the future protection of these properties. None of this funding was associated with coastal erosion. With regards to the long timeframe for implementation of protection, Mr. Gallagher explained that the OPW had to ensure that works being undertaken were of a suitable standard and achieved value

for money. The time spent examining the issue would ensure an appropriate solution is implemented and monies aren't wasted on ineffective measures.

Cllr Finnerty highlighted an issue with flooding at Ballyboy, following road raising works undertaken as part of the South Galway Scheme. Mr. Gallagher undertook to review the location and to respond to Cllr Finnerty.

**Update Joe Greally, Loughrea Local Link Office, Loughrea**

**LMD2348**

The Cathaoirleach thanked Mr. Greally for making a presentation at the MD meeting. He stated the Local Link provides a valuable service to the public and expressed his disappointment with a lack of engagement from the NTA.

Mr. Joe Greally advised of plans for the Local Link to enhance the service going forward adding that the service operates independently from the National Transport Agency (NTA). He stated the service provides an affordable and regular means of transport between bus and train services aiming to forge as many links as possible. Mr. Greally advised he is contacting the NTA to expand the door-to-door service and gave details of various transport routes available. He stated there is an appetite for more services between Loughrea and Galway which the NTA are aware of, he stated, funding is a priority. He explained that every bus is wheelchair accessible, and all Local Link drivers are fully trained. Mr. Greally stated the intention is to put in place electric busses adding one electric bus is operating in Galway West. Mr. Greally advised that the service has been used by 20,000 passengers.

The members thanked Mr. Greally for his attendance and his informative presentation.

Cllr. Maher stated he requested the NTA to attend the MD meeting to discuss transport services between Loughrea and Galway stressing local people rely heavily on these services, he emphasised it is not acceptable that the last bus from Galway to Loughrea is at 6pm. Cllr. Maher said he wants this changed immediately before students are on leave. He requested a clear message to issue to the NTA to provide bus services for commuters who work various shifts. Cllr. Curley repeated the requirement for additional bus services from Galway to Loughrea after 6pm. He enquired if the Municipal District could require the NTA to attend at least one MD meeting annually to discuss public transport provision.

Cllr. Donohue stated there are similar issues in Gort and, the last bus from Galway to Gort leaves at 6pm. She stated when the public service transport issue for Galway was raised with the NTA an unsatisfactory answer issued.

Cllr. Kelly agreed and requested a Senior Member of the NTA to be brought before the MD, and the matter should be brought before an Oireachtas Committee.

Cllr. Canning sought clarification on who the NTA reports to. He enquired if the Members could attend an NTA meeting to raise their concerns.

Cllr. Byrne stated the request for Mr. Greally to attend the MD meeting resulted from the NTA's unwillingness to engage with the MD.

Cllr. Kinane requested Mr. Greally advise the NTA that, additional bus services are required for Maree, Clarinbridge, Kilcolgan, Ballinderreen and Gort, and there is no bus service after 6pm. She enquired if an additional Local Link service could be arranged to link with the 404 in Oranmore, requesting a trial from 8pm.

Cllr. Finnerty raised concerns on behalf of constituents who need access to Social Welfare Services but encounter access difficulties resulting from a lack of public service transport.

The Cathaoirleach stated the Local Link are doing very positive work and requested Mr. Greally to bring a strong message to the NTA regarding the need for additional public transport services within the Loughrea Municipal District.

Mr. Greally stated he will provide the NTA with feedback from today's meeting and in particular a request for later evening services. Cllr. Donohue requested a copy of Mr. Greally's correspondence to the NTA.

**Update on the Greenway, Annmarie Johnston, Senior Executive Engineer      LMD2349**

Ms. Lowe read a statement to the Members on behalf of the National Roads Project Office Project Manager Ms. Johnston, SEE.

Cllr. McClearn stated that a briefing was held on Friday resulting from which, he understood, an update would be provided to the Members.

Cllr. Byrne stated that the process is wrong, and the project should be stopped and restarted, he expressed his disappointment with the content of the update. Cllr. Kelly stated his agreement with Cllr. Byrne's comments.

Cllr. Kinane stated the announcement provides no further information and a member of the project team should be in attendance to provide an update. She stated the Greenway is a priority for a lot of people.

Cllr. Curley stated the Council is responsible for the sensible spending of public monies and enquired why a process is not set up to decide who is awarded the new Greenway contract, he asked if it has been decided if a fault occurred previously and enquired if the contract can be put out to tender, Cllr. Kelly concurred with Cllr. Curley's comments.

Cllr. Kelly stated it might be more prudent to improve the road network.

Cllr. Donohue stated clarification was sought on whether RPS could re-tender for the contract at an increased cost, she said she requested details of services acquired by the Council for monies spent to date on the project.

The Cathaoirleach expressed his amazement that RPS could walk away from the Greenway Contract. He referred to the Roads Programme meeting stating the lack of funding was

bemoaned by Councillors who must explain that some roads cannot be improved due to lack of funding, he enquired regarding the amount of funding spent on the Greenway Project.

Cllr. Canning also queried how much money has been paid to RPS and the total spent on the Greenway to date. He agreed, it was baffling that a company could walk away from a contract and re-tender for it.

Cllr. Canning stated some contractors complete 'shabby' works and re-tender for other works, he raised concerns regarding the use of public monies. He stated measures should be put in place where, should works be completed below standard, contractors cannot re-tender until they prove their work meets public service standards.

The Cathaoirleach stated the issues raised concern in a few Municipal District areas and need to be answered at Plenary. Cllr. Kinane stated she understands a mutual agreement existed between RPS and Galway County Council to rescind the contract.

**Discussion to be held on presentation from St. Brigid's College, Loughrea (Globe Traffic)**

**LMD2350**

The Cathaoirleach acknowledged the excellent presentation made by students from St. Brigid's College at the MD Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024. He stated, out of respect for the students a discussion on the presentation will take place to consider actions to be taken.

Cllr. Kelly requested erection of signage to raise awareness of 'idling' and suggested funding be sought from the relevant Department. Mr. Haugh responded, the Board of Management may make a Section 254 Licence Application for any proposed signage and the MD Office can arrange for the signage to be erected if successful.

Cllr. Curley proposed a letter should issue from the Municipal District to the Department of Education requesting a new policy be introduced requiring drivers of public vehicles to switch off engines when 'idling.' Cllr. Canning seconded the proposal.

Cllr. Maher complimented the students on their initiative adding that students put forward excellent new ideas.

**Cathaoirleach's Business**

**LMD2351**

Cllr. Donohue informed the meeting that The Concerned Citizens have advised that following discussions with the HSE there is progress with the opening of the Seven Springs Day Care Centre in Loughrea. Cllr. Kelly it is a victory for common sense. Cllr. Curley expressed his thanks to the committee stating the right thing is about to happen.

**CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNUI ANSIN**



**CLLR JIMMY McCLEARN  
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD**

19/04/2024

Date

**Motions**

**Cllr. Donohue**

**To ask Galway County Council to put in place additional refuse bins in the town of Gort and to prioritise same**

Cllr. Donohue explained that a business in Gort requested the provision of additional refuse bins in Gort town stating it would help with the clean-up burden being placed on Tidy Towns. She advised the Members she received a written response from Ms. Flynn dated 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 clarifying that Galway County Council is currently submitting a proposal for funding for compactor bins under the Anti-Dumping Initiative via our Environment Department which includes Gort. This would be dependent on Department approval. The Council will review the key locations outlined by Cllr. Donohue and revert with regards to Notice of Motion funding for this.

Cllr. Maher enquired if items collected from refuse bins in Loughrea are recycled or sent to landfill. He added that Tidy Town Groups try to recycle waste insofar as possible. Mr. Haugh responded that segregation of street litter had been trialled unsuccessfully in the past and that generally any recycling specific litter bins tended to be contaminated by liquids and non-recycling waste. Consequently, the waste collection operators were not inclined to collect this material. Post-collection segregation of waste from town refuse bins would require additional resources and implementation of new measures to manage the task. Galway County Council are working with the Tidy Towns Groups and have made recycling facilities available in limited circumstances to all collected waste be disposed of correctly.

**Cllr. Kinane**

**Proposed that the amendments/submissions received (as part of the consultation process of the 2023 County Road Traffic Special Speed Limits) in respect of schools within the Loughrea Municipal District, be placed on the agenda of the March meeting of the Loughrea Municipal District for consideration.” Cllr. Curley seconded Cllr. Kinane’s proposal and the motion was agreed by the Members.**

Cllr. Kinane stated she did not know where to take this matter now as she is advised progress is "suspended" pending the new legislation on speed limits. She stated it is not good enough to have reports sitting on shelves and hopes that no serious incident occurs. She queried the reserved function of the Members with respect to speed limit byelaws. She enquired who should legal advice be sought from. She stated that advice may be required from the Chief Executive, and she added that the matter was discussed previously at Plenary. Ms. Lowe responded that Mr. Prendergast has expressed his willingness to attend a further MD meeting to discuss same.

The Cathaoirleach stated there is a serious issue regarding the role of the Elected Member, he proposed the Motion needs to go back on the agenda for April. Cllr. Curley seconded the proposal. The Cathaoirleach continued, the issue of the role of the Elected Members is broader than the topic at hand.

Cllr. Curley proposed extending the reduced speed limit in Bullaun Village to slow traffic near the new school which is due to open shortly. He added there is an obligation on the Members to push the motion through to assess how reserved functions can be exercised.