

**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  
Loughrea Hotel & Spa, 7<sup>th</sup> December @ 2pm.**

**I LATHAIR:**

**Cathaoirleach**

**Cllr. M Maher**

**Baill:**

Cllr's. G. Donohue, PJ Murphy,  
J. Byrne, M. Kinane, I. Canning, J. McClearn,  
P Hynes, G. Finnerty

**Oifigigh:**

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services;  
Mr. D. Mitchell, Senior Engineer;  
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer;  
Mr. M Melody; Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. B. Sheehy, Assistant Engineer;  
Mr. A. Cunningham; A/Senior Staff Officer;  
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. B. Mostert, Executive Architect  
Mr. Ciaran Wynne, Senior Executive Engineer,  
Mr. JP O'Carroll, Architectural Technician.

Apologies from Cllr Murphy who was unable to attend.

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea  
held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**LMD 20047**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting for Loughrea MD held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 were proposed by Cllr McClearn, seconded by Cllr Curley and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Arising from the minutes, Cllr Curley expressed concern regarding street cleaning operations around the main streets in Loughrea town and the importance for the local economy that bins in the town be serviced satisfactorily coming into the busy Christmas period. In response Mr. Haugh asked that areas of concern be identified to him in regard to servicing of the bins in the town and he would progress the matter within the resources available.

Cllr Byrne raised the matter of staffing within the Municipal District. He noted that despite the increase in the roads allocation to the County over the last number of years, it had not been reflected in an increase in the staffing numbers required to meet the increased demands of the service.

Cllr McClearn referred to a recent retirement in the Portumna area and the need that a replacement be put in place as a matter of urgency to meet the level of service required in the area. Mr. Mitchell in response stated that each staff member who leaves/retires from the organisation would be replaced but the timeframe for the appointment of replacements are outside of his control and a matter for HR.

Cllr Kinane referred to the boundary changes and that areas such as Renville, Maree and Clarinbridge are now in the Loughrea MD. She acknowledged the work done by staff but the need for additional staff was pressing to deal with issues such as flooding within the municipal district.

Mr. Mitchell said that he took on board all the comments and concerns raised. He added that grants for roads allocation are for that purpose alone and cannot be used for staff recruitment. It was a constant challenge to work within the budgets available and to ensure that monies are available for plant materials as well jobs such as hedgecutting. While he acknowledged the need for area staff, he expressed particular concern in regard to the numbers of technical staff working in the directorate and the wide-ranging workload which exists in this area such as supervision, tendering, risk assessments etc.

**To consider the report under Part 8 of Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), for a proposal to carry out the following works at Portumna Courthouse, Clonfert Avenue Portumna Co. Galway: Change of use from former courthouse and living quarters to office & exhibition/event spaces, demolition of existing single story extension to bridewell building and formerly used as snooker hall, circa 73m<sup>2</sup>, demolition of existing single storey annex extensions to side and rear of courthouse, circa 32m<sup>2</sup>, demolition of internal elements to provide new exhibition/event space, toilet facilities, stores, office spaces, first floor projecting walkway & ancillary accommodation, repair and or replacement of existing sash windows and doors, repair and or replacement of existing rainwater goods, repair of existing roof structure and finishes where required, raking out and repointing of stonework where required, New single storey extension to facilitate a café/ancillary office space, circa 46m<sup>2</sup> with new entrance and the formation of a patio space adjacent to public footpath including associated works, new patio area to rear of courthouse with fixed tensile structures, alterations to site works to include new security gates, boundary treatments, landscaping ,connections to public sewer and associated works, New building mounted and free-standing signage and external uplighters.**

**The subject works are located within Portumna's Architectural Conservation Area and includes works to a Recorded Protected Structure No. 471 and buildings listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage No's 30343020 & 30343021.– ref LA 05/20**

**LMD 20048**

Mr. Mostert gave an overview of the scheme to develop the Courthouse building as a community arts centre and remote working hub. He gave a brief overview of the CEO's report on the scheme and advised that it recommends approval of the scheme.

Cllr Canning thanked Mr. Mostert for the presentation and welcomed the proposal for the Portumna area. He acknowledged that this project had been gestating for a long number of years and that there had been a big effort from a number of people within the local community in progressing this, including the local chamber of commerce.

Cllrs Curley, McClearn and Finnerty thanked the regeneration team for the presentation and welcomed the proposal. They acknowledged that the plans for a café on site would be a great addition and would serve to attract people to the building.

Cllr Kinane added that it was a very positive news story and asked about disability access to the building. Mr. Mostert stated in response that the café will be fully accessible and that ramp at the entrance would give direct access to the café and courtroom.

Cllr Joe Byrne welcomed the project and asked about a design team leading the project. In response Mr. Wynne had said that an application under Category 1 funding from the Dept had been made for the project and that it had been included in the cost plan for an architect lead design team for the works. This was similarly done in respect of the proposed redevelopment of Loughrea Town Hall.

Ms. Ruane thanked the Mr. Wynne and the Regeneration Team for the presentation and added that the project represented a good news story for the area and a showcase for county Galway. Ms. Ruane recommended the approval of this part 8 planning proposal as outlined in the Chief Executive's report. The part 8 planning proposal to carry out works at Portumna Courthouse, and the Change of use from former courthouse and living quarters to office & exhibition/event spaces was proposed by Cllr. Canning, seconded by Cllr. McClearn and agreed by all.

#### **Flooding Update LMDM 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

**LMD 20049**

Mr. Enda Gallagher updated the meeting as follows:-

**South Galway Gort Lowlands FRS** – the redrafted Feasibility Report is due to be submitted to the OPW for review this week. Depending on the feedback from the OPW, the report may yet be published before Christmas. The public Options Consultation is due to commence in the first half of January 2021.

**Dunkellin** – Craughwell pedestrian bridge was being re-opened to the public today following an eighteen month closure. At Dunkellin bridge, cladding works are being finished at present and the fencing is completed in adjacent lands. One culvert remains outstanding on the Aggard Stream and will be installed in 2021, when weather permits access to lands.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed that flooding issues at Mannin Cross and Ballyboy / Lackan have been discussed with the OPW and it now appears likely that a report is to be commissioned for these locations.

Cllr Maher thanked Enda Gallagher and his staff for all his work over the past year and contributions to the Loughrea MD in this regard.

## Cathaoirleach Business

LMD 0050

Cllr Maher raised Cllr Kinane's submitted notice of motion for the following  
*'calling on Galway County Council water safety officer to investigate a safe location at Renville Pier for public swimming to be permitted that in turn will provide the opportunity for a life guard to be appointed at designated location.'*

Cllr Kinane stated that swimming at Renville pier had been ongoing for many years but a risk assessment of the area carried out in July 2020 had concluded that swimming was a risk due to the area being used to launch powerboats, sailing boats and leisure craft in the area. She asked that a location be identified to ensure safe swimming can happen at the location and that consideration be given to the appointment of a lifeguard subject to funding available.

Cllr Donohue asked that a full copy of the risk assessment conducted be furnished to all members of the Loughrea MD. She said that the area is regularly used for swimming and an amenity in the area.

Cllr Kinane added that she had met Fiona Holland SEE regarding this matter and was given a summary of the risk assessment. She reiterated her concern that due to the large volume of swimmers in the area that a designated area needed to be found and feared that an accident could occur if this did not happen.

Cllr Donohoe submitted the following Notice of Motion to the Cathaoirleach;

*'That Galway County Council resolve the impasse with the Kilchreest Group Water Scheme. Currently the Long-Term Impact Charge (LTI) of €30 per square metre for each square metre of public road carriageway disturbed is not grant aided by the Department of the Environment. As such the Kilchreest Group Water Scheme has been unable to progress its works for the last two years. I am asking that Galway County Council remedy this impasse as a matter of urgency by requesting that this charge be included by the Department as part of the grant aid for Group Water Schemes.'*

Cllr Donohue raised the issue of Kilchreest water scheme and asked for action to be taken to resolve this matter. She outlined her concerns over the impact that the long-term impact charge was having on Group water schemes. The cost of the charge is currently €30 per square metre and is adding thousands to the cost of upgrading water mains by group water schemes. In addition, these costs are not covered in any of the grants that are available, and this is putting a huge financial burden on the group water schemes. It was agreed that Ms. Ruane would write to the Department regarding this matter asking that they include the charge in the grant aided schemes and at no additional cost to the GWS.

Cllr Pat Hynes seconded this motion raised by Cllr Donohoe and asked the Council to evaluate the ongoing situation to providing a quality water supply in the area.

Cllr Byrne outlined a number of issues that had come to his attention;

- Safety concerns on the R446 - cats eyes are damaged and it is currently very difficult to demarcate the lines on the road and a danger to road users.
- He asked for detail on the Council's Noise action plan, referring to a number of houses in Ballyhugh area which are experiencing high level of noise from major roads in the area.
- Referred to the Plenary budget and the specific allocation for footpaths that Mr. Jim Cullen DOS had approved.
- Ask that the Council's Tourism officer make a presentation at the next meeting of the municipal district for clarification on how monies allocated to tourism initiatives would be spent in the area. He felt that it was very important that the members have an input in to how tourism could be developed within the municipal district.

Cllr Donohue raised the recent departure of the Carmelite Sisters from Loughrea after a presence of 300 years in the area. She asked that a letter be sent to the order acknowledging their contribution to the community.

Cllr Kinane asked about the Conservation officer attending the next meeting of the Loughrea municipal district. She outlined as a matter of importance in dealing with kerbstones in Rinville which in some areas the footpath was now at the same level as the road. She asked that this could be looked at as a project for the Active Travel scheme.

Cllr Maher informed the meeting that the conservation officer would attend the next meeting of the Loughrea MD in January and that if there are particular matters of concern which the members wished to raise in this regard that they could be sent to Aidan Cunningham in the Environment Section.

Cllr McClearn informed the meeting of a large sign on the L8738 section of the R355 which can blind the view of drivers using the road and wished to have it investigated.

Cllr Canning raised his concern regarding a number of bridges in the Portumna area and asked to whom he may raise his concerns to. In response Damien Mitchell asked that he outline his concerns to Fergal Fahy, executive engineer.

Mr. Haugh thanked the councillors for their comments. He agreed that he would look into matters raised by Cllrs Byrne, Kinane and McClearn in regard to the issues on the R446, at Rinville and the sign on the R355 respectively.

Cllrs Byrne and Curley asked about the status of the use of CCTV by the Council in combating litter and waste pollution matters. Ms. Ruane confirmed that the matter was still with the Data Protection Commission and the Council had yet to be informed of their final report on same.

Ms. Ruane addressed the issues raised by the Councillors during the meeting acknowledging Cllr Byrne's comments about the allocation of monies for footpaths in the municipal district. She agreed that she would link in with Alan Farrell in regard to the attendance of the Tourism officer at the next Municipal District meeting and the importance to outline a strategy for the area. The conservation officer would also attend the next meeting of the Loughrea MD. Ms. Ruane acknowledged the good work of Mr. Mitchell and the Infrastructure and Operations directorate despite the existing challenges and the need for further resources in that area. She thanked the members of the SPC for their contributions over the year and the work of the Environment section and Loughrea Area Office in the preparation and organisation of the municipal district meetings.

Cllr Maher thanked everyone & wished all a Happy Christmas & a Happy New Year.

The next meeting of the Loughrea MD was set for 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

**CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CHRUINNIU ANSIN**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Maher". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

**CLLR MICHAEL MAHER  
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD**