

**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 on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023 AT 11.00 am**

**I LATHAIR:**

**Cathaoirleach**

Cllr. P.J. Murphy

**Baill:**

Cllrs. Shane Curley, Ivan Canning, Gerry  
Finnerty, Joe Byrne, Geraldine Donohue

**Oifgich:**

Mr. Gerard Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. John Coyle, Executive Engineer  
Mr. Niall Kennedy, Executive Engineer  
Mr. Enda Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer  
Ms. Maria Flynn, Administrative Officer  
Ms. Siobhán Cleary, Staff Officer  
Ms. Colette Kennedy, A/Assistant Staff Officer

**Leithscéalta:**

Cllrs. Marina Kinane, Jimmy McClearn,  
Michael (Moegie) Maher, Declan Kelly  
Ms. Eileen Ruane, Director of Service  
Ms. Rachel Lowe, Senior Engineer

The Members and Staff expressed their sympathy to Ms. Eileen Ruane on her recent bereavement.

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Municipal  
District of Loughrea held on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**LMD2294**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Donohue and seconded by Cllr. Canning and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Finnerty referred to the presentation by Mr. Brent Mostert, Executive Architect, Galway County Council and Mr. Mehron Kirk from BDP on the Town Centre First Project and Public Realm Enhancement Project for Gort at the Municipal District Meeting held on 17th April 2023. He stated that consultation had taken place on the proposed project, and he stated that it didn't go well. He stated that some businesses and residents felt hard done by due to a lack of consultation and referred to one business owner who was unhappy because a bus stop will be located outside of his property which would affect parking spaces. Cllr. Finnerty referred to negative remarks on

social media regarding the project. He added, the project will not 'get off the ground' if there is too much opposition. Cllr. Finnerty also stated that an additional car park is needed in Gort which should have happened with the introduction of Pay and Display in the town.

Cllr. Finnerty stated that a meeting should be held, firstly with the project team, Councillors and Oireachtas members, followed by a meeting with members of the public and businesses. He added that the design team need to sell the project to the public. He enquired who will clean the streets of the town and maintain the planting. He added that he recently received a complaint regarding the condition of the playground in the town.

Cllr. Byrne stated that he received communications from the community and businesses regarding the proposed project and there is an onus on the Members to ensure the project proceeds in the correct way. He stated it is prudent for the project team to meet with Elected Members, Members of the Oireachtas and the public to get everyone on board.

Cllr. Byrne stated that, as the project is a Part VIII application, it will be decided upon by the Members and it must be acceptable to the community.

Mr. Haugh responded that it was previously clarified the plan needed to be transformational in order to access future funding and that any such plan was sure to generate strong views. He further stated that Galway Council had been actively engaged from the start with the establishment of the Town Team and that he was positive that further engagement would be facilitated as required and he would contact Mr. Mostert with the view to arranging same.

Cllr. Byrne added that the level of staffing in the Municipal District is inadequate to meet the needs of the area and requested Mr. Haugh to raise this matter at Plenary. He asked how many outdoor staff are in the Gort area and made a comparison to Ennistymon which is of similar size but with three times as many staff. He acknowledged the works being completed by the staff in the MD. Mr. Haugh responded that the current complement of outdoor staff in the Road Section of the Municipal District of Loughrea is 28 and that the Chief Executive is aware of the deficiencies in staffing levels and has committed to tackling this issue as a priority.

Cllr. Donohue expressed her sincere sympathy to Ms. Eileen Ruane on the passing of her Mother. Cllr. Donohue stated that she is not yet in receipt of the Minutes of the Greenway Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023, she stated as a public representative it is important to receive the Minutes promptly.

Cllr. Donohue stated that, as a public representative, mandated by the people, she wants to ensure that all people affected by the Gort Project should be included and all concerns listened to. She stated, at the previous consultation, a significant number of questions were raised and asked that the 10 Councillors support her request for residents, stake holders and businesses be invited to future meetings. She stated it would be helpful to walk the area to assess proposed changes.

Cllr. Curley stated he received correspondence from Uisce Eireann stating the issues with the water supply in Loughrea is not affected by the change of water from Loughrea Lake to Luimnagh. He added that he has received information from specialists stating that the change of water source can affect the ph balance with a subsequent reaction in the cast iron pipes. He stated, that the Loughrea Lake is an excellent source of water. Mr. Haugh stated that he will liaise with Uisce Eireann and request a direct response to Councillor Curley on his specific query.

Cllr. Canning raised a concern regarding the condition of the road at the Green Door on the N65 where there has been another car crash this morning and requested works be carried out at this location to make the road safe. He stated that signage or resurfacing may be required along the dangerous stretch, and this should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Mr. Coyle stated that he is aware of the situation and has raised the matter with TII, he stated that he will revisit the issue again on Wednesday when he meets the Regional Road Safety Engineer and, if extra signage, fencing or cutting back of hedges is required this can be reviewed.

Cllr. Murphy stated that the Gort Project will be a positive transformation for the town and stated that the plan should be modified to make it work for all affected persons.

#### **Flooding update**

**LMD2295**

Mr. Enda Gallagher updated the meeting as follow: -

The Engineering consultants continue to review minor alterations to the channel proposals along the scheme and have TCD modelling as required. The Cost Benefit Analysis is being developed but will require clarifications from TII before it can be finalised. The development of Exhibition documents and land searches is continuing. A meeting was held recently with the Greenway and Active Travel teams to discuss their requirements for the Dungory culvert, to allow the project team to encompass all requirements before finalising the design at this location.

The Environmental consultant is continuing works on the preparation of the EIAR & NIS. A small number of additional field surveys are to be undertaken this month. Archaeology field surveys are ongoing and landscape field visits have been completed for the scheme. Photomontages are now being developed for numerous viewpoints along the scheme. Noise and vibration surveys are now in progress.

An update meeting has now been scheduled for the SGFRC and members of Cuan Beo for Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May at 4.00 in Gort Fire station. The Loughrea MD councillors have already been emailed the details. Both the engineering and environmental consultants will give presentations.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed that the Public Exhibition is still programmed for September 2023. He noted that there are still numerous inputs to the project that could possibly delay this timeframe. Environmental findings during surveys are a risk but some issues are outside the direct control of the Project Team.

Following comments from Councillors Byrne, Finnerty and Murphy, regarding the culvert on the M18, it was confirmed that the Chief Executive is directly involved in the talks with TII on behalf of Galway County Council. It was also confirmed that the motorway would have to be closed to facilitate the installation of the proposed new culvert, with traffic diverted from the Gort interchange to Kiltiernan along the old N18.

Mr. Gallagher highlighted to the meeting the ongoing commitment that the OPW are showing towards the project, both in terms of their financial contribution to the project and the support that is being provided at Steering Group and operational level.

### **Cathaoirleach's Business**

**LMD2296**

A discussion took place regarding difficulties some members experience in accessing Minutes and other documents on mobile phones. Ms. Flynn stated she will follow up with the IT Department and revert.

Cllr. Byrne proposed extending the agenda to include reports from Departments within the Council, such as Housing and Planning. He welcomed the temporary waiver in respect of development contributions and discussed the costs incurred upon submitting a planning application, he referred to the number of planning applications refused in quarter 1 in the Loughrea MD and stated that awareness should be raised on decisions on one off housing. He stated it would be helpful to have a member of the Planning Team attend a MD meeting to discuss the planning refusal rate. Cllr. Finnerty also raised concerns regarding costs associated with planning applications. He stated that there appears to be difficulty in securing planning permission between Derrybrien and Slieve Aughty and as far as Kinvara, he added there is a delay in securing pre-planning meetings.

Cllr. Finnerty enquired regarding the opening of water tables along the R380. Mr. Haugh responded that a contractor is engaged annual to address areas identified on the Regional and National Road network for the opening of water tables. In response to Cllr. Finnerty's query on the cleaning of road signs along the R458 in advance of the upcoming Triathlon, Mr. Kennedy responded that some of the works had taken place and cleaning will resume this week.

Cllr. Finnerty enquired of the Council's position with respect to spraying of weeds along footpaths and kerbs. Mr. Haugh stated that this is a particularly contentious issue but a contract should be entered into shortly for the purpose of weed control in specific locations within our Towns, he added that Tidy Town groups and Community and Voluntary groups have been of great assistance previously and that the Council do not have the resources to deal with all areas within the Municipal District. Mr. Haugh stated that a Biodiversity Officer had recently been appointed and that she would engage with the Tidy Towns and Community groups further if required.

Cllr. Donohue addressed the litter problem in the Gort Area stating that a huge clean-up was completed at Kelly's Lane (Courtney Lane) and further dumping has since taken place. She requested an update from the Environment Section on what can be done and what enforcement or monitoring measures can be put in place. Mr. Kennedy explained

that there are issues in identifying persons responsible for illegal dumping. Ms. Flynn stated that, at present, CCTV is not an option, but she added that the Code of Practice is under review presently. Cllr. Curley requested an update on the number of residences who have been requested to produce proof of waste disposal services. Ms. Flynn advised she will provide an update. Cllr. Curley stated a motion was passed previously in this regard.

Cllr Curley advised the Members that he received complaints from members of the public regarding Boy Racers between Ballinakill and Kennedy's Cross and asked if measures could be put in place to stop this behaviour. Mr. Haugh responded that this is a matter for An Garda Siochana.

Cllr. Canning requested a meeting on site with Mr. Haugh and Mr. Coyle regarding the Motor Home Park in Portumna. He stated that last weekend 26 campervans were refused access as the park was full, he added that consideration should be given to extending the park and stated that Coillte own lands to the rear of the park which should be considered for extending the facility. Mr. Haugh responded that it would be premature to meet unless a potential funding stream could be identified for any future proposal. In this regard, he will raise this matter with Mr. Alan Farrell, Director of Services. In response to Cllr. Canning's response on the cutting back of a hedge at the old schoolhouse in Portumna, Mr. Coyle stated that he will follow up on this matter. Cllr. Canning also requested a greater presence of the Dog Warden in the Portumna area to deal with the issue of dog fouling, Ms. Flynn stated that she will follow up on this and revert.

In response to Cllr. Murphy's query on the repair of a streetlight in Maree, Mr. Haugh stated that this matter should be raised directly with Electric Skyline and requested Cllr Murphy to provide the specific details to the Gort area Office.

Cllr. Byrne enquired if there is any flexibility in opening facilities at Traught Beach. Mr. Haugh stated that the facilities are scheduled to open in or around 27<sup>th</sup> May however, this is flexible depending on the status of the weather as has been the case previously.

**Any other business**

**LMD2297**

Mr. Coyle advised the Members that he has been in consultation with TII and has secured additional National Road funding for the Council for all National roads across the County to the value of €850,000. Currently the Road funding for National Road Maintenance is €466,000 across the County and this will be increased by €327,000 for a number of maintenance projects. An additional €523,000 has been allocated to capital pavement project overlays to improve the surface texture across the county. He listed additional funding in the Loughrea MD as follows; N67 Drainage in Kinvara €20,000, N67 Footpath repairs €8000, N67/ N65 Pavement repairs €45,000 and N65 Kilcooley National School temporary surface dressing €47,000.

Cllr. Curley enquired if the road works at Kilcooley National School will be delayed by the current Group Water Scheme., Mr. Coyle responded that temporary surface dressing works will be completed in advance of the current water scheme. He advised that the road will be fully resurfaced next year.

Mr. Haugh clarified that this is a short-term safety intervention on the N65.

Mr. Haugh advised Cllr. Curley that works from Annaghbride to Kilcooley, as per the Roads Programme, will be completed this year.

Ms. Flynn clarified for the Members that the Annual Meeting will take place on 12<sup>th</sup> June at 10.30 am followed by the Monthly meeting at 11.00 am.

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**CLLR P.J. MURPHY**  
**CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD**