

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 Galway Council Chamber on 13th November at 11.00 am**

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. J. McClearn

Baill:

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

Oifigigh:

Ms R Lowe, Senior Engineer
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Mr. L. Flynn, Executive Engineer
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer
Ms. C. Kennedy, Assistant Staff Officer

As Láthair:

Cllr. M. Kinane
Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services

**Presentation to Students from St. Brigid's College, Loughrea (winners in the
Anti-Litter Competition) by An Cathaoirleach Jimmy McClearn**

LMD2325

The Cathaoirleach stated that presentations to Student's from St. Brigid's College, Loughrea who won the Anti-Litter competition would proceed at the December Municipal District Meeting. The presentation was postponed due to travel disruption caused by Storm Debi, for which a red weather alert was in place for East County Galway until 5 am followed by an orange warning in place until 10 am. The Cathaoirleach stated it is important to recognise the great efforts of students in the December meeting.

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in
the Loughrea Chamber on 9th October 2023**

LMD2326

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 9th October 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Maher, seconded by Cllr. Finnerty and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Finnerty welcomed that the Council had taken on board concerns he raised at Municipal District level regarding a housing estate on the Tubber Road, adding that the Local Authority has done what it was requested to do for the estate.

Cllr. Finnerty clarified, in the October MD meeting he stated that it was one, not two, properties that was burned down in the Gort area. He informed the meeting that the property should be restored before Christmas and the tenant reinstated.

The Cathaoirleach requested the Members to review Minutes of Meetings and submit any corrections to the Meetings Administrator, Ms. Maria Flynn, by close of business on the Thursday prior to the Municipal District Meeting taking place. Ms. Flynn stated that no changes will be made after that timeline.

Cllr. Curley acknowledged the great job done by the Council on the road from Loughrea to Tynagh, however he stated that the edge of the road is deteriorating around Masonbrook and is dangerous in parts.

He raised concerns regarding the speed at which vehicles travel along the old Galway Road in Loughrea from the Westbridge and enquired what safety measures can be put in place to reduce speeding in this area. He stated, this is a death trap and advised he would contribute NOM monies towards safety measures. Ms. Lowe advised that dropping the speed limit won't necessarily help, particularly if there is an issue of noncompliance at the existing limit, but stated that there are generally two issues, one is enforcement the other engineering. She stated that Mr. Haugh will liaise with Cllr. Curley regarding engineering measures which could be implemented and added that national legislation is expected next year which could see speed limits in both urban and rural areas change.

Cllr. Donohue enquired if an update will be provided regarding the Athlone to Galway Greenway. She referred to a reply she received from the Project Team regarding queries she had raised regarding the fixed price contract, monies paid to RPS to date and works completed to date. She stated that the response stated that the information is commercially sensitive and figures could not be disclosed by Westmeath County Council. Ms. Lowe advised that a representative from the Greenway team is not present to provide a response but stated that she will follow up on this query. Ms. Flynn stated that she will liaise with Ms. Johnston, Senior Executive Engineer for a response.

With respect to her query on works completed, she was advised that phases one and two were completed. She enquired regarding the handover process. Cllr. Donohue stated that the monies are public monies, and the response is not good enough, she asked whose decision it was to choose the route and added she now has more questions than answers. The Cathaoirleach stated that the response which issued was very bland.

Flooding Update

LMD2327

Mr. Enda Gallagher updated the meeting as follow: -

The project team are still active on the EIAR and NIS and these works will continue for the next month. The focus is still on the NIS (SACs) and the potential effect of the scheme on

turlough habitats. Trinity College Dublin have now provided the environmental consultant with additional environmental mapping and Mott MacDonald have commenced their examination.

Draft EIAR documents are to be submitted to the OPW for comment before Christmas.

Mr. Gallagher confirmed he had responded to Cllr Murphy's query on the road at Rathorpe in Fiddaun after the last meeting.

Mr Haugh confirmed to Cllr Finnerty that the current water levels in the South Galway turloughs were under constant review by the area office. The issue of appropriate signage at the flooded road in Ballylee would be reviewed before the next meeting.

In response to a query from Cllr Maher, Mr Haugh confirmed that works had been carried out on the Dunkellin Drainage District (Craughwell to Kilreekil) in 2023 and it was intended that funding would be sought again in 2024 to continue maintenance works.

**Taking in Charge Abbey Court, Portumna
(Declaration of a road to be a public road)**

LMD2328

The taking in charge of the road at Abbey Court, Portumna was proposed by Cllr. Canning and seconded by Cllr. Kelly.

Road commencing at its junction with L-4327-0 in the town of Portumna and extending Northwest for a distance of 70M ending at point B on TIC Map.

Cllr. Curley enquired regarding the taking in charge of a laneway to the rear of four houses in a town in the Loughrea Municipal District on which he stated illegal dumping is taking place, he stated the TIC process could take up to four years. Ms. Lowe responded that she is aware of the area he is referring to and advised that there is a boundary rectification issue at this location and engagement is taking place with the developer of this estate on this matter. Cllr. Curley stated he is willing to help if required as, he stated, this matter could result in serious health issues. In response to the query from Cllr. Curley and other Cllrs, Ms. Lowe stated she will send a briefing note to all MD Cllrs.

Cllr Maher stated that work has been ongoing with this matter for a significant number of years and all Councillors are continuing to work with the TIC section to get this over the line.

Cathaoirleach's Business

LMD2329

In response to Cllr. Curley's enquiry regarding a request for a deputation to proceed at the December Municipal District Meeting, Ms. Finn responded that she would liaise with him separately on the matter.

Cllr. Finnerty stated that over the last 3 years he has raised concerns regarding flooding between Loughrea and Gort and asked that the responsible contractor be identified for these works and be recorded on the Minutes. He referred specifically to a flood on the road outside

Coley Fahy's adding that the water tables have not been opened and that the stretch of road between Castledaly to Gort has not been touched.

Cllr. Donohue agreed with the necessity to open water tables along the route. She added that signage needs to be reviewed and made visible, she explained that a young man destroyed a car recently when he hit a flood. Mr. Haugh advised that a review of any flooding locations brought to their attention will be carried out. In response to Cllr. Donohue's query regarding ongoing maintenance and drainage works when roads have been resurfaced, Ms. Lowe advised that the Dept of Transport provides funding to support drainage works more generally across the roads network and specific areas of concern can be addressed. Mr. Haugh advised that, water tables are not completed by Contractors, but had been in the past, he said water tables weren't contracted along the Loughrea to Gort route this year as the financial resources available didn't provide for it. Cllr. Finnerty asked if the overseer is aware of the position and asked if it is possible to get the water tables along this route done, Mr. Haugh stated that it is intended to have Council staff carry out drainage works over the next couple of weeks. Cllr. Donohue thanked Mr. Haugh and the staff of the Loughrea MD for the work that they do, she stated if funding is not available then works cannot be completed.

Cllr. Finnerty stated that there is a significant amount of grass on footpaths in Gort, and in particular on Georges Street, he enquired if the mechanical sweeper can be used to clear the footpaths before Christmas. Mr. Haugh responded that mechanical sweepers have been ordered for Loughrea and Gort, he added staff will then be provided with relevant training upon delivery of the machines. Cllr. Finnerty stated, that due to the bad weather there are a lot of trees including Ash trees which have fallen in the area over night. Cllr. Murphy and Cllr. Donohue previously highlighted the issues concerning Ash Trees and Cllr. Murphy stated this should remain on the agenda.

Cllr. Donohue stated that she attended a Neighbourhood Watch meeting in Gort recently where there was great praise for the Community Warden due to footpaths now being clear of parked vehicles making it easier for pushchairs and wheelchairs to use the paths.

She reiterated Cllr. Finnerty's comments regarding the requirement to have footpaths clear of grass and leaves and added that the paths are greasy and should be steam cleaned. She enquired if assistance can be provided to the Tidy Towns Committee to which Mr. Haugh advised the Executive Engineer, Mr. Flynn, recently met with the Tidy Towns Committee.

Cllr. Donohue raised safety issues regarding Hennelly's Cross in Gort and stated that members of the public are crossing the road at the worst point, which is very dangerous. She asked if a barrier should be installed to direct people to the crossing and requested a review of the crossing be carried out from a safety perspective. Mr. Haugh stated that the crossing is being considered further under the Safe Routes to School Programme attached to the local school. Cllr. Finnerty stated that the junction at Hennelly's is very narrow, and wheels of trailers end up on going onto the kerb.

Cllr. Donohue reiterated comments made by Cllr. Finnerty regarding an access route to the rear of properties in Crowe Street, Gort. She asked if the laneway had been decommissioned and stated that residents need access to the rear of their properties. Ms. Lowe requested Ms. Flynn to liaise with the Housing Unit regarding the position on access to the back alleyway.

In response to Cllr. Kelly's request to provide an update regarding the retrofitting of properties in St. Laurence's Fields, Loughrea, Ms. Lowe requested Ms. Flynn to liaise with the Housing Unit requesting an update. Cllr Kelly referred to a query he submitted to Electric Skyline stating that he got a blasé response from the person who responded to his call and he stated that this is unacceptable. Cllr. Maher agreed stating that he reported a 'light out' 3 months previously which is not yet repaired.

Cllr. Curley sought clarification on the number of Vacant Homes Grants drawn down in Galway County and, particularly in the Loughrea area. He stated he is receiving queries from members of the public regarding the initiative, he asked if additional staff should be provided in this area to expedite grant applications. Ms. Lowe stated that she will arrange to have the matter regarding Vacant Property Refurbishment Grants followed up.

Cllr. Maher requested an update from Mr. Haugh on the lights at the Westbridge, Loughrea and stated that they are still not working satisfactorily. He added, people will picket outside the next meeting if the situation is not remedied. He stated that he has been contacted by businesses in the town who are negatively impacted by delays at the lights.

In response to Cllr. Maher's query Mr. Haugh advised that funding is being sourced for the installation of a loop on the Woodford side of the Junction. He advised that he believes there has been an improvement in traffic flow through the junction with 30 to 40 cars getting through the junction on each sequence change of the traffic lights.

Cllr. Curley stated he previously request a red filter light be installed for traffic turning right onto Dunkellin Street as cars are cutting off traffic travelling from the Athenry Road. Mr. Haugh stated this had been considered previously but given the complex geometry of the junction layout, the current solution was a safer option.

Cllr. Maher raised concerns regarding trees in a dangerous condition in the Grove located across the road from St. Brendan's Nursing Home, Loughrea and stated he is prepared to allocate NOM funding to assist with trimming of trees and removal of dangerous trees together with clean up works which should make the area safer and more accessible. Mr. Kennedy stated that he will discuss works to take place at the Grove with Ms. Jayne Baker, Gardener.

Cllr. Maher stated that three quotes had to be sought to engage a contractor to carry out the works and stated he will raise at the Plenary meeting that the Council should consider recruiting a permanent tree surgeon to deal with these issues throughout the Council's administrative area such as those in the Grove and St. Laurence's Fields. Ms. Lowe expressed concern at managing duties of a tree surgeon and stated Council staff are only permitted to use chainsaws during daylight hours. Mr. Haugh stated that the difficulty is not particularly in sourcing quotes for the removal of trees but, more so, that it is a costly exercise that requires funding. He stated, his priority would be to recruit additional General Operatives as staffing levels are low. Cllr. Maher stated that 19 arborists recently graduated from the GRETB and it could create an opportunity to recruit them into the Council.

In response to Cllr. Maher's query on the availability of free parking in Loughrea town in December 2023 and Ms. Lowe stated free parking will be commencing on 8th December 2023 for the Christmas period and an end date will be confirmed. Cllr. Maher stated that free parking over the Christmas period typically commences at 11.00 am.

Cllr. Canning enquired from Mr. Haugh if a mechanical sweeper will be made available to the Portumna area or if the machines being purchased will be shared between the towns, Mr. Haugh responded that a mechanical sweeper will be purchased for Portumna in 2024.

Cllr. Canning asked for an update on the position at the Green Door, he stated that there have recently been two further car crashes at the location and stated signage is required as soon as possible. He enquired if there has been any progress regarding the pedestrian lights which are out of order at Finns Filling Station, he stated the lights are out of order for three weeks. Cllr. Canning requested an update on the appointment of a driver to the Portumna area, he stated that the lorry has been parked up for over twelve months and he is continuously receiving calls regarding potholes in the area. Ms. Lowe responded that she would liaise with Mr. Prendergast and will issue a response to the Members. Mr. Haugh stated that this matter had been raised at the last MD Meeting and, at that time, it was anticipated an existing driver with the capability to operate the velocity patcher would be able to deal with this issue. This hasn't materialised but alternative measures are being put in place.

The Cathaoirleach stated that the previous driver retired in September 2022, which was well flagged, he said he cannot understand how the position hasn't been offered fifteen months later. He said it sends out a very poor signal on how the Council carries out its business. He stated a piece of machinery was purchased from taxpayers' money and is standing idle.

The Cathaoirleach stated that the residents of the Nursing Home in Portumna depend on the pedestrian lights in Portumna, he added the lights were recently repaired but are out of order again, he requested an update from Mr. Haugh who advised that a new unit is required, and additional funding will be required to fully replace the existing lights. He advised that Electric Skyline will be contacted to remind them of their contractual obligations in relation to the repair and maintenance of the public lighting network. Cllr. Finnerty agreed stating that lights are out of order in Kilbeacanty also.

The Cathaoirleach stated he is conscious that the meeting had to be held online due to travel difficulties caused by Storm Debi, but if he was aware that two Councillors were unable to join the meeting, it would have been postponed.

Cllr. Curley enquired if an amendment should be made to Standing Orders to allocate a particular period of time for Councillors to speak. The Cathaoirleach confirmed that requests to speak should go through the Chair as set out in Standing Orders and that every Councillor would continue to be given a fair hearing.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN



**CLLR JIMMY MCCLEARN
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD**

