

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 17th April 2023 at 11.00 am**

I LATHAIR:

Cathaoirleach

Cllr. P.J. Murphy,

Baill:

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

Oifigigh:

Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services
Ms. R. Lowe, Senior Engineer
Mr. G. Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. J. Coyle, Executive Engineer
Mr. N. Kennedy, Executive Engineer
Mr. E. Gallagher, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. M. Flynn, Administrative Officer
Ms. S. Cleary, Staff Officer
Mr. A. Farrell, Director of Services
Mr. B. Mostert, Executive Architect

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in
the Loughrea Chamber on 13th March 2023** **LMD2286**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 13th March 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Maher seconded by Cllr. Byrne and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. McClearn referred to his comments following the Concerned Citizens deputation at the Municipal District Meeting on 13th March 2023, and he wished to clarify that he stated, "that HIQA inspected St Brendan's in Sept 2019 and again in January 2020 and the HSE knew at this stage that there was a problem at St. Brendan's, and they took no action to address this". Ms. Flynn stated that the minutes will be amended to reflect this.

Cllr. Byrne proposed to suspend Standing Orders and to proceed with the presentation on the Gort town Centre First and Public Realm Enhancement Projects and then to revert to the meeting, all present agreed to the proposal.

Cllr Donohue asked Cllr Maher of the outcome of the meeting with HIQA and the HSE regarding the Day Care Centre at St. Brendan's Nursing Home which he referred to in the March MD meeting and he responded that

"There were two meetings and that he missed both meetings due to other commitments," he also said he spoke to the Topping Trust and the building for the Day Care Centre has been identified and he stated that the Topping Trust has allocated funding for the conversion and that the HSE will allocate funding to cover the remaining costs. He stated that he is invited to another meeting.

He advised that the Centre should be reopened at the end of the year, and he stated the works do not require planning permission for conversion into a day care facility to replace the Seven Springs Day Care Centre situated on the St. Brendan's Community Nursing Unit Campus. Cllr Donohue asked why Cllr Maher is the only Public Representative invited to attend such meetings, he said he did not know and suggested Cllr. Donohue could check it out. Cllr. Donohue went on to say to say that she cannot understand why he is the only Public Representative invited to attend.

Cllr. Donohue enquired when the Minutes of the Greenway meeting held on 21st March 2023 will be available, Ms. Flynn advised that the Minutes of the meeting were not taken by the Loughrea Municipal District staff, and stated she would follow up for Cllr. Donohue.

Cllr. Kinane requested an update on the repair of flashing beacons outside Labane National School, Mr. Haugh confirmed that a contractor has been appointed and he hopes that these works should be completed in the coming weeks, he stated that he will follow up on this directly with the contractor.

Cllr. Curley stated that the Uisce Eireann should revert to providing water from the water source in Loughrea Town until the pipes are upgraded, he advised that residents are now seeing discoloured water coming from their taps. He stated that there is a significant difference in the water being provided from the water source in Loughrea to that being provided from Luimnagh which he said, is causing a reaction to existing pipes. He stated that it is vital to revert to sourcing water from Loughrea.

Cllr. Maher agreed and he insisted that the water situation in Loughrea must change, and stated water should be provided to the town from the Loughrea Lake which is a good source of water. He proposed a motion that Irish Water revert immediately to the old system until current piping is relaced, his motion was seconded by Cllr. Curley. He requested a response to this proposal from Irish Water. Cllr. Murphy requested a letter be drafted to Irish Water in this regard.

Cllr. McClearn sought clarification on staffing for the Portumna Office, he stated that he enquired previously regarding the appointing of an Area Engineer in the Portumna Office and requested an update. He enquired regarding the delay in replacing staff when it is known in advance they are will retire. Ms. Ruane explained that all current vacancies will be filled. She clarified that an offer for a replacement Clerical Officer has been made for the Portumna Office. Ms. Ruane requested advance notice of specific vacancies for discussions at MD meetings so that she can be prepared to provide an accurate response.

Cllr. Canning enquired regarding the provision of a lorry for the Portumna Area, he stated that a lorry was provided previously for the filling of potholes but now Portumna is without a lorry driver. He stated that a lorry is provided in Portumna only once or twice weekly which is not enough. He enquired why it takes so long to have staff replaced when a vacancy arises. Cllr. Kelly, McClearn and Canning raised concerns regarding potholes in the Portumna Area. Mr. Haugh responded that it is hoped to have a lorry driver in place shortly, and that a new Velocity Patcher will shortly be operational and will be shared between the Tuam and Portumna areas.

Cllr. Byrne stated that, with respect to potholes which require filling and refilling, he would welcome a plan showing there are measures in place to deal with this. He compared staffing numbers in the Gort/Kinvara Engineering Area where there are 9 outdoor staff plus one supervisor, to Ennistymon where there are 27 outdoor staff plus one supervisor. He stated it is challenging to deliver on demands with a complement of one third of outdoor staff.

Cllr. Curley enquired if a strategy for further training for technical staff through an Engineering degree would improve staff retention, Ms. Ruane added that funding is not available for this and explained that staff retention can be an caused because of promotion.

Briefing from the Consultants on the Gort Town Centre First and Public Realm Enhancement Projects

LMD2287

Mr. Mostert introduced the project, he advised the Members that a number of meetings have taken place in respect of the Gort Project and advised that a Community Workshop is scheduled to take place on 27th April 2023. Mr. Mostert clarified that a leaflet drop will be arranged for affected businesses in the Gort Area and that an online portal is in place to facilitate affected businesses regarding the scheduled meeting on April 27th.

Mr. Mostert introduced Mr. Mehron Kirk from BDP who attended the meeting online and made a presentation to the Members displaying maps and drawings of the proposed scheme. Mr. Kirk explained that public consultations and information sessions were held with members of the public and it included two schools from the area. It enabled the team to use the comments and suggestions in planning the scheme. He explained that a workshop consisting of 40 people was held to discuss key project objective such as (a) vehicle management and transport infrastructure, (b) wayfinding and signage and (c) public realm design. Mr. Kirk concluded by advising the Members that following the consultation process, 10 key objectives were identified as follows; (1) create public space in town centre, (2) reduce vehicle speed and improve pedestrian safety, (3) more planting and street trees, (4) more off-street car parking, (5) improve footpaths, (6) extend river walk and create a new riverside town park, (7) ensure amenities are developed and accessible, (8) create space for young people, (9) more art and culture in town and (10) address derelict buildings and vacant sites within the town.

Mr. Kirk advised that the project design is scheduled for completion in June 2023 and the plan will link in with the Gort Local Area Plan which is scheduled for completion this year.

In response to queries raised, Mr. Farrell explained discussions are taking place with NPWS regarding linkage with Coole Park, he added extensive research has been carried by BDP with respect to parking design and provision and the slowing of traffic in Gort. To qualify for

funding the plan must be transformational and make a real difference to the town. Mr. Farrell stated that the plan is functional, and he said, "a rising tide lifts all boats".

Cllr. Byrne said it was a fantastic job and he could not find any fault with the presentation. It was a positive piece of work. Cllr. Finnerty welcomed the investment in the town, it was a refreshing and positive plan. He did have reservations about taking away street parking and the impact on local businesses. Cllr. Donohue said the presentation was impressive and requested a copy. She posed the question why some businesses did not get an invitation. Cllr. Kinane thanked Mr. Mostert for a great presentation but said that parking spaces are critical for businesses to keep Gort thriving. Cllr. Murphy said it was a fantastic presentation and hopefully it can be achieved. He said the parking issue is addressed and it needs a change of behaviour, he added the planting of trees is welcomed. Cllr. Maher complimented the team on the plan. Mr. Kirk advised the members that an analytical study was done on the town to ascertain who is using the town for business and to look at the time scales.

The Members welcomed the project and thanked Mr. Mostert, Mr. Farrell and Mr. Kirk for their informative presentations and information and stated that it is crucial to ensure affected businesses and members of the public are included in information sessions to allow for their comments and suggestions.

Flooding Update

LMD2288

Mr. Enda Gallagher updated the meeting as follows: -

The Engineering consultants are currently examining minor amendments to the channel options as needs arise with during the EIAR. Additional model runs are being undertaken by TCD and flood maps are being produced. The production of the final Cost Benefit Analysis for the scheme has commenced, Exhibition documents are being produced and land searches continue to identify affected landowners.

The Carbon assessment for the scheme has also been commenced and will form part of the EIAR considerations.

The Environmental consultant will continue to work on the preparation of the EIAR & NIS. A small number of additional field surveys have been identified to date and will be undertaken in the next month. The wintering birds' surveys have finished, and the final report is being produced. The last of the agronomists' reports has been received and is being reviewed, this signals the end of the public consultation process in advance of the Public Exhibition.

The project team have engaged with Greenway team following confirmation that the preferred greenway cycle route in Kinvara will traverse the proposed new culverts at Dungory. Talks are still in progress with TII regarding the M18 culvert proposals. The Public Exhibition is programmed for September 2023.

Mr. Gallagher identified the EIAR findings and the CBA as the greatest risks to the project progressing. The current engagements with TII are now on the critical path of the project programme.

Cllr. Byrne proposed that an update meeting be held with the Members of the South Galway Flood Relief Committee, as it has been quite some time since the last update was provided. Mr. Gallagher undertook to progress a meeting.

Cllr. Murphy sought clarification on post scheme flood levels on the Ballylee/Dromore Road, Mr. Gallagher is to provide this clarification.

Installation of dog disposal bins in the Cowpark, Clarinbridge

LMD2289

Cllr. Kinane stated the reason for including this matter on the agenda was she cannot get the matter resolved, and she added, the Cowpark is scheduled to be opened in early June. She stated that there are 3 stakeholders involved with the Cow Park namely, Galway County Council, Coillte and The Brothers of Charity. Cllr. Kinane added that the Cowpark is the responsibility of Galway County Council, and an issue exists in the area regarding dog fouling which hugely affects the health of children. She added that Galway County Council has a responsibility to enforce the 1997 Litter Pollution Act where it is an offence for dog owners not to pick up after dogs, she added that this is an amenity that'll be hugely used, and she requested a final decision on the installation of dog disposal bins. She added that the trails in the Cowpark will have the same status as the trails in Renville. Cllr. Kinane stated that €7,000 has been provided for the maintenance of the park and requested an answer with respect to the installation of the bins. Cllr. Maher seconded Cllr. Kinane's proposal for the installation of dog disposal bins. Ms. Ruane stated that she will liaise with Mr. Michael Owens, Director of Services to enquire if this can be done before June.

**Presentation from John Coyle – Pavement Survey Condition Index
Loughrea MD Summary**

LMD2290

Mr. John Coyle, Executive Engineer made a presentation to the Members on the Pavement Management Survey and advised that there is 1867 kilometres of roads in the Loughrea Municipal District comprising Regional and Local Roads. He stated that one third of the road network in County Galway is in the Loughrea MD. Mr. Coyle outlined the steps involved in the management of local and regional roads. He explained the use of public funds in providing safe, comfortable, and economical road surfaces and how using the condition evaluations assists in setting priorities for the projects together with the selection of appropriate treatments.

Mr. Coyle explained that 78% of the roads in Loughrea are in very good condition and 22% of roads require overlays. He added that data from the most recent NOAC report shows a significant improvement in road conditions in comparison to 56% in good condition and 44% in poor condition in 2016. Mr. Coyle explained that the road network is surveyed every two years and the report is used for providing a roads assessment and budgeting at year end. Mr. Coyle stated that many local tertiary roads are in poor condition he stated, these roads are funded by Council grants and highlighted additional resources are necessary for these roads.

The Members thanked Mr. Coyle for his presentation, following which a discussion took place regarding the condition of local tertiary roads in the Loughrea MD. Cllr. Finnerty stated he

had never seen the roads in as bad a condition and he referenced roads in Gort and Kilbeacanty, Cllr. Donohue agreed and referenced specifically potholes in the Killimor area. Cllr. Byrne stated that the report was a visual survey and stated that they need to look at the condition of the road substructure and questioned the accuracy of the report. Cllr. McClearn stated that the Loughrea MD inherited a lot of bad roads from the Ballinasloe area, specifically Eyrecourt, when the boundaries were changed. He stated there are a lot of bogs in the Loughrea MD it makes it difficult to tarmac roads. Cllr. Canning stated that budgets should be rejected until central government provides sufficient funding and that the Members should not be accepting an insufficient budget. Cllr. Kelly complimented the works being undertaken by the staff in the Municipal District given the level of funding provided.

Cllr. Kinane enquired if additional funding can be sourced through the Climate Action Plan. Ms. Lowe said that there is funding available under the Climate Change and Rehabilitation Scheme, and this is used to carry out works to deal with climate effects including road raising. Ms. Lowe advised that additional income would be welcome in respect of tertiary roads and if additional monies became available from the Council's own resources this would assist in completing the works.

In response to Cllr. Kinane's enquiry regarding the provision of additional funding to the Loughrea MD when Clarinbridge, Maree and Oranmore became part of the Loughrea MD, Ms. Lowe stated that when boundaries change, corresponding funding changes accordingly. The funding is distributed based on road lengths and this calculation is adjusted every time MD Boundaries change. Cllr. Curley stated that if additional funding is sourced, more staff need to be recruited to carry out works.

Cathaoirleach's Business

LMD2291

Cllr. Maher thanked Mr. Coyle and the Loughrea MD staff for works completed for the reopening of Corry's Field.

Suspended until next meeting

Any other business

LMD2292

Suspended until next meeting

Confirmation of Minutes of Special Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Galway County Council Chamber on 2nd March 2023

LMD2293

The Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 2nd March 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Kinane seconded by Cllr. Byrne and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

CHRIOGHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN



CLLR P.J. MURPHY
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD