

**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 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022 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, M. Maher and J. Byrne

**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  
Ms. P. McHugo, Assistant Staff Officer

**Confirmation of Minutes of Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Chamber on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022** **LMD2258**

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022 were proposed by Cllr. Finnerty, seconded by Cllr. McClearn and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

**Confirmation of Minutes of Budget Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held in the Loughrea Chamber on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022** **LMD2259**

The Minutes of the Budget Meeting of the Municipal District of Loughrea held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022 were proposed by Cllr. McClearn, seconded by Cllr. Donohue and agreed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Byrne sought clarification on whether the codes cited in the minutes of the Budget Meeting could be amended to reflect those cited at the Plenary Budget Meeting. He also sought clarification on how additional funding of €200,000.00 for Town and Village

Maintenance would be distributed in the Loughrea Municipal District, Ms. Ruane advised she would seek clarification from the Head of Finance in this regard.

Cllr. Kinane referred to previous advice that no additional funding was being made available for road sweeping in housing estates. She stated that at the Plenary meeting it was confirmed that an additional €200,000.00 was made available and she stated that Mr. Pender reverted to confirm part of this funding could be allocated to sweeping of estates. She stated, in her opinion, estates which have been taken in charge should be swept during the winter months and suggested the additional funding could be allocated for this purpose.

Cllr. Kinane stated that she is disappointed that hedges have not been cut in Maree, Clarinbridge and Oranmore to date and asked if the programme of works could be revisited for next year regarding hedge cutting schedules in the Municipal District. Mr. Haugh clarified that hedge cutting has taken place in Maree since the previous week. Cllr. Kinane acknowledged that maintaining gullies are not part of the winter plan but stated gullies should be maintained. Mr. Haugh confirmed that hedge cutting will commence at the opposite side of the Municipal District, i.e., in the Maree Area/Kilcolgan areas next year and that gully maintenance forms part of the standard operational works carried out at this time of year.

Cllr. Donohue discussed a decision to postpone the Greenway Workshop until 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023, she stated that affected landowners and homeowners are concerned, this will overshadow their Christmas. She stated that she attended a protest in Drumacoo on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022, and she hopes at the meeting in January all concerns will be taken on board and all parties will work together. She stated that she expects a full briefing on progress at the meeting.

A discussion took place in which Cllrs. Curley, McClearn, Finnerty and Maher expressed their dissatisfaction with the service provided by Electric Skyline and referenced lighting in Corry's Field, Bridge Street in Gort and in Killimor. It was highlighted that in some cases it took 3 months for faults to be remedied and there is often a lack of response from Electric Skyline to email and telephone queries. Cllr. Murphy advised that there are 9 lights out of order between Ardrahan and Labane. The members enquired what action the County Council can take to address same and Cllr. McClearn advised that other companies submitted tenders for the provision of the service when the contract was put out for tender. Ms. Lowe requested the Members to submit specific queries directly to her regarding tickets issued to Electric Skyline which have not been resolved. She advised those present that she is in receipt of details from Electric Skyline regarding tickets raised and advised as follows: -

At the end of October 2022, the total lights in the Galway area amounts to 12,500 of which 48% are LED lights, she stated a further 100 were added to this in October 2022. She advised that 206 tickets were submitted at the end of October 2022, 177 of which were closed, and the average turnaround time for completion of tickets is 5 days and that 1.5% of faults reported were online. She requested specific details regarding tickets raised regarding lights at Corry's Field, Bridge Street, Gort and Killimor for which she will directly liaise with Electric Skyline.

Cllr. Canning stated that he enquired at the previous meeting regarding the cutting back of hedging at the old school in Portumna and requested an update on works. Mr. Haugh advised that responsibility for the maintenance of hedges and trees lies with the landowner but advised that he will engage with the homeowner.

Cllr. Maher asked for clarification on a plan for the next 7 days regarding maintenance of National Routes in the Municipal District. Ms. Lowe clarified that the Winter Maintenance Plan is available on the website, and it provides a list of all roads (National, Primary, Regional, and other roads). She explained that roads to be salted are detailed in the Winter Service Plan. She stated that she will email a copy of same to all Members.

Ms. Lowe advised the Meeting that she attended the National Severe Weather Co-Ordination meeting earlier and they had advised that the low temperatures, frost, and ice would continue until Friday and there would be low levels of precipitation resulting in salt remaining on the roads for days. She stated it is expected normal Atlantic conditions would return at the weekend.

#### **Presentation by Public Participation Network**

**LMD2260**

Ms. Charlotte Maye and Mr. Vincent Lyons made a presentation to the Members on the Public Participation Network.

Ms. Maye informed those present that the primary purpose of the PPN is to enable the PPN member groups to input into and have their voices heard within the formal decision-making structures of the local authority. The PPN is now the main way that local authorities connect with groups active in their area. She advised that the PPNs were developed on foot of the White Paper on Voluntary Activity (2000), Task Force on Active Citizenship (2007), Working Group on Citizen Engagement (2013) and Local Government Reform Act 2014.

Ms. Maye explained that the PPN is a statutory entity giving a voice to community groups on Local Authority Committees and Boards and it is the main way for Local Authorities to engage with communities. This provides a pathway for communities to have a real voice in decision-making committees and boards at Local Authority level.

She stated that PPNs provide a vision for change through social policy, participation and representation and it's about coming together as a collective to shape the community. She explained that the functions of the PPN are to facilitate the participation and representation of communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner, to strengthen the capacity of community groups and to contribute positively to the community in which they reside/participate and to provide information relevant to the environmental, social inclusion, and community and voluntary sector and acts as a hub around which information is distributed and received. She explained that there are 31 PPNs across the country and she wanted to take this opportunity to introduce herself to the Members and make the connection with them and show them how PPNs can be an ally to them in their work.

Ms. Maye thanked Ms. Flynn and the Members for giving her the opportunity of giving the presentation.

Mr. Lyons expressed his gratitude at being afforded the opportunity to talk to the members and publicise the grants available under PPN. He advised the members that there are over

2000 groups on the PPN mailing list, comprising more than 10,000 people. He stated that during the Covid-19 pandemic a lot of opportunities were missed but he is looking forward to engaging in more Town Hall events in 2023. He advised those present that Charlotte will be leaving Galway County Public Participation Network to take up a new position and he and the Members thanked her for her work and contribution during her time in Galway County PPN. He advised that future queries can be directed to Mary Mullen until Ms. Maye's post has been filled following her resignation.

The Members thanked Ms. Maye and Mr. Lyons for their presentations and for the work they have done in the past, they gave recognition to Galway County PPN for their continued engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic. They extended their good wishes to Ms. Maye on taking up her new position.

Cllr. McClearn stated that he is a member of the Association of Local Government and following local discussion and feedback the matter of abolishing PPNs was raised and in some areas, Councillors believed that the PPNs should be abolished, he stated this is not the position in Galway. He stated perhaps going forward lines need to be defined as people may not understand what PPNs are about and the supports that are available under PPNs. Mr. Lyons responded that some PPNs don't have a good relationship with Local Authorities, he stressed the importance of PPNs, Local Authorities and Councillors working collectively together by attending meetings and putting facilitators in place. He stated that Galway's PPN is the largest in the Country.

Cllr. Kinane stated that she has put forward a motion to the Plenary Council on a PPN matter regarding beach byelaws. She said that there is a gap in areas of cultural and biodiversity on 2 SPCs regarding water sports, fishing community, sailing clubs and sea swimming, she said she understands that the PPN would engage with relevant Community Groups, she explained that it is understood groups must be a member of the PPN to engage. Mr. Lyons advised that the DOEHLG are conducting a review of the structures of SPCs and SPC guidelines, he stated after the 2024 Local Elections he hoped there would be more PPN members. Ms Maye responded that the PPN is working with the SEAI regarding free energy audits which was recently advertised in the newspapers. With respect to beach byelaws, Ms. May stated she would love to have more community representation on the SPCs, and she hoped the SPCs would make an application for more members.

Cllr. Donohue asked Ms. Maye and Mr. Lyons if they could provide an organisational chart of staff who are part of the Galway County PPN Team.

In response to Cllr. Curley's query on the position regarding Irish language in the East of the County with respect to PPNs, Ms. May stated it is hoped next year each Municipal District will advise the PPN of their priorities so that they can create a vision for that Municipal District.

## **Flooding Update**

**LMD2261**

Mr. Enda Gallagher updated the meeting as follows: -

**South Galway Gort Lowlands FRS** – The Engineering consultant is advancing design proposals for the N67 culvert in Kinvarra, which are to be submitted to the NRPO before Christmas. Construction methodologies for all works are being prepared for review under the EIAR. Irish Drilling have completed all site works under the Ground Investigation contract. Feedback from TII on the M18 culvert proposals are expected before Christmas.

The Environmental Consultants has completed baseline noise surveys for the scheme. Winter bird surveys are underway at present. Habitat mapping that will determine if weirs are required on the scheme are to be finalised before Christmas.

Cllr. Byrne queried how the programme for the project had slipped by one year in a twelve-month period. The meeting was told in August 2021 that the project would be going to Exhibition in Q4 2022, and Exhibition is now scheduled for July 2023. Cllr Byrne requested a report is prepared on the delays for the next meeting.

**Ballyboy** – Mr Gallagher confirmed that overlay and surface dressing works were completed at Ballyboy a fortnight ago. Covers on watermains are to be lifted this week and the road will be lined before Christmas if weather conditions permit and the contractor is available.

Cllr. Murphy noted that sections of the new wall were only 500mm above the road as opposed to the stated 700mm that was meant to be on show.

#### **Cathaoirleach's Business**

**LMD2262**

Cllr. Maher expressed his gratitude to Mr. Gallagher for the works he has completed, he extended his gratitude to staff in the Loughrea Municipal District for working together with the Members for the completion of works.

Cllr. McClearn sought clarification on the reason for the change in the telephone number for the Portumna Office. He said he understood that the old number would remain in operation for 3/6 months, Mr. Haugh responded that he would contact the IT Department to enquire if the old phone number could remain operational for 1 year.

Cllr. McClearn referred to the emerging design for Kilmeen Cross which he stated appears to be a more favourable solution. He stated that he understood Galway County Council carry out unannounced farmyard inspections, he queried if unannounced inspections are a good practice as it could inadvertently lead to safety concerns on the farm.

Cllr. Donohue stated that the water in Gort has been stop and start for days. She advised that Irish Water said bad weather has had an effect on water supply and she added she is concerned as the temperatures are very low at present, she also added that the water levels have been low for a number of months. Cllr. Byrne stated that answers were not provided regarding the low levels of water in the Gort area. Ms. Lowe advised that water supply in Gort was affected by freezing temperatures and she said she would make enquiries for more information. Cllr. Donohue enquired regarding the provision of funding for Christmas lights as some villages have benefitted and others haven't. She extended her good wishes to St. Thomas's next week.

Cllr. Byrne advised that in Gort, 300 households were without electricity, and that the ESB sent out notifications to people advising them that electricity would be switched off, he stated that a protocol needs to be put in place regarding utilities as there are elderly people living in Gort with no electricity and no heat. He said that a traffic mobility and area plan should be implemented for Kinvara and asked why the plan for Kinvara which should have been completed in 2022 will not start until early 2023. Ms. Lowe responded that the Local Area Plan for Gort will be done in Quarter 2 of 2023 together with the Local Transportation Plan as they are completed in tandem with each other. She stated that it is very fortunate to have Systra on board to progress the plans. Ms. Lowe advised that Local Area Plans for Gort, Athenry and Loughrea will be published by May of next year. In response to Cllr. Maher's query, Ms. Lowe advised that the Loughrea LAP should be in draft form in June 2023 and stated she will liaise with the Planning Department in this regard. Ms. Flynn advised that an email issued recently from the Planning Department regarding Local Area Plans.

In response to Cllr. Curley's query on when the Garden of Remembrance at Fairgreen will be restored following the completion of works on the Courthouse, Mr. Coyle advised that an excavator is due to commence works tomorrow, 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022 but it could be March/April 2023 before the grass seed has been planted. Cllr Curley sought clarification on when the footpath at Danesfort Road will be progressed under an Active Travel Grant, and when it will be completed. He also sought for a review of the road studs/cat's eyes on the Loughrea bypass. In response to Cllr. Curley's query, Mr. Haugh advised that he will arrange for a review of the road studs/cat's eyes on the bypass and informed Cllr. Curley that the Danesfort Road project was designed but would require a road safety audit prior to progressing through the planning stage. Cllr. Curley asked if clarification can be given on when works on the Grange Road will be completed. In response to Cllr Curley's query in relation to the flood relief works due to be carried out on the Grange Road at Boggy Park, confirmation was given by Mr. Haugh that the project will be revisited and enhanced if the works prove unsuccessful.

Cllr. Kinane stated that further consideration needs to be given to improving hedge cutting in the Municipal District and an increase in the roads budget should be provided. She advised that coastal erosion is an issue which has not yet been dealt with and stated that she understands a new member of staff will be appointed to deal with climate change issues, she requested an invite to the Municipal District meeting would issue in January or February 2023 to the new appointee to provide an opportunity to discuss issues. Ms. Lowe responded that she would ask Mr. Tom Prendergast, newly appointed Senior Engineer over piers and harbours, to give the members an update in March 2023.

Cllr. Kelly welcomed the update on the solution for Kilmeen Cross and thanked the Council and other agencies for their work.

Cllr. Canning requested additional lighting at the entrance to Shannon Park, Portumna which he stated is not adequately lit, Mr. Haugh confirmed he will arrange for a review at the area and revert.

A discussion took place regarding Christmas light displays in towns and villages in the Loughrea Municipal District. Cllr. Maher clarified that funding is not provided by Galway County Council but raised by a local committee towards the provision of Christmas lights and community committees can make an application for such funding.

The Members extended Christmas Wishes and thanks to the staff in the Loughrea Municipal District for their work in 2022.

**Any Other Business**

**LMD2263**

Cllr. Byrne stated that there are a lot of negative comments regarding underspending in Active Travel in Galway County Council and requested an update on Active Travel projects. He sought clarification on whether Galway County Council are seeking enough Active Travel funding for projects and if there is an issue regarding staffing. Ms. Lowe stated that she will ask the Project Manager for Active Travel to attend the January Loughrea MD meeting to give a specific briefing. She stated that there has been approximately a 35% spend which is on par with other Local Authorities. She confirmed that staffing has been an issue and there is currently one vacancy in the Active Travel team, she added a request for further staffing will be submitted when the last post has been filled. Ms. Lowe advised that the Cycle Strategy for the County is not yet completed and there is a need to take an overall vision, and it is hoped additional staff can be appointed to the project next year. She stated she will discuss the changes and projects with Ms. Paula Higgins, Senior Executive Engineer.

Cllr. Murphy extended his compliments to Mairín Doddy, Conservation Officer and the heritage team on works they have completed, he extended his thanks to Green Party Minister Eamonn Ryan for funding for heritage projects.

In response to Cllr. Murphy's question on speed limits and Gort Local Area Plan, Ms. Lowe advised that representation can be sent by email to Tom Prendergast. Cllr. Kinane stated that she has submitted a representation on speed limit reviews with respect to Lough Cultra and Killeeneen National Schools.

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CLLR P.J. MURPHY  
CATHAOIRLEACH, LOUGHREA MD

