

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE**

**Galway County Council**

**Ceantar Bardasach Bhaile Átha an Rí Órán Mór**

**Municipal District of Athenry Oranmore.**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Municipal District of Athenry Oranmore held in the Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2018.

**I LATHAIR:**

**BAILL:** Cllr. M. Noone (Cathaoirleach)  
Cllr. G. Cronnelly  
Cllr. J. Cuddy  
Cllr. P. Feeney  
Cllr. M. Kinane  
Cllr. F. Kearney  
Cllr. J. Charity.

**OIFIGI:** Mr. M. Owens, A/Director of Services.  
Mr. J. Cullen, Director of Services,  
Mr. M. Timmins, A/Director of Services,  
Mr. D. Mitchell, Senior Engineer,  
Mr. D. Pender, Senior Engineer,  
Mr. P. Gavin, Executive Engineer,  
Ms. N. Heffernan, Administrative Officer,  
Ms. G. Cooley, Assistant Staff Officer,  
Ms. C. Hannon, Assistant Staff Officer,  
Ms. H. Fox, Assistant Planner,  
Ms. G. Healy, A/Administrative Officer Administrator.

**Item No. 1: To confirm Minutes of the Athenry Oranmore Municipal District Meeting held on 12th December, 2017.** **(AOMD 1801)**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Kearney and **SECONDED** by Cllr. Cuddy, the Minutes of the Athenry Oranmore Municipal District Meeting held on 12th December 2017 were **AGREED**.

**Matters arising from the Minutes:**

Cllr. Cuddy asked if the funding allocated to Bawnmore Cross was adequate to carry out the necessary improvement works.

Mr. Mitchell replied that only minor realignment works would take place, as recommended by the Regional Safety Officer, as any major realignment would increase the speed near the

school. He said that land acquisition would be required in order to increase sight lines and the landowner affected has expressed his agreement that the proposed works go ahead. He said that the cost estimate which had been completed had taken all relevant matters into consideration and it is intended that tenders will be invited for the proposed works without delay.

Cllr. Cronnelly said that the Athenry Gardaí had dealt with a number of robberies in the Town recently and that Garda resources were also needed to attend at a number of road accidents which occurred on the new M17/M18 Motorway the previous week due to sudden adverse weather events. He said that the number of Gardaí in Athenry Town needed to be increased considerably in line with other towns such as Loughrea.

Cllr. Noone agreed with Cllr. Cronnelly that Garda numbers need to be increased in Athenry.

**Item No. 2: To consider and approve the Municipal District Schedule of Works 2018 including the Roads Programme 2018. (AOMD 1802)**

Mr. Owens referred to the Schedule of Works 2018 for the Municipal District.

He referred to the Housing Works Programme, stating that the housing maintenance budget was based on the number of units in the Municipal District. He said that the Council owns 2,400 houses across the County and that 225 of those are located in the Athenry Oranmore Municipal District. He said that the Council has received an allocation of €275,000 from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government (DHPCLG) towards the refurbishment of houses in 2018 but this funding is not sufficient to cover the cost of refurbishment. He said the Council proposes to raise a loan in the sum of €10 million to meet capital investment for housing stock and this proposal will be considered by the Members at the February 2018 Meeting of the Plenary Council. He said that a multi-annual programme of works would be carried in order to add to and preserve the Councils housing stock, while achieving efficiencies and value for money. He said that a survey of all houses would need to be carried out and that priority issues to be dealt with in 2018 included fire safety measures, smoke alarms, fire blankets, among others.

Mr. Cullen addressed the Members and gave an overview of the Draft Roads Programme.

Mr. Pender outlined the plans for traffic calming in Claregalway and the proposals to retexture a number of locations at the roundabouts in Oranmore, including sections near the Maldron Hotel and near the Community Centre, and also sections from Claregalway Castle to the Roscommon Road Junction. He also outlined proposed roadworks along the N84 at seven locations, to include Cloonboo, following completion of design stage.

A discussion took place regarding the Roads Programme.

In reply to Cllrs. Noone and Kearney, Mr. Pender said that a Safety Auditor from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) had inspected the Claregalway National School location and Mr. Pender confirmed that this location is included in the proposed traffic calming design.

Cllrs. Cuddy, Kinane and Charity expressed their frustration and dissatisfaction with the level of funding received by Galway County Council for the maintenance and improvement of roads. They expressed the view that the Athenry Oranmore Municipal District does not receive a fair share of the overall funding, having regard to the volume of traffic passing through the District from other parts of the County to get to Galway City.

Cllr. Kinane referred to the National Planning Framework, *Project Ireland 2040*, which had been launched the previous week in Sligo and she expressed the view that the plans outlined were far removed from the reality that exists in Galway in terms of funding available for infrastructure in the County, including road improvements and maintenance.

Cllr. Cronnelly asked was there an update on the link road at Athenry, and he expressed the view that there should be signage coming off the new Motorway indicating that Athenry is a Heritage Town.

Cllr. Charity concurred with Cllr. Kinane's view in relation to the National Planning Framework. He referred to the proposed overlay works on the N84, stating that the works proposed were not adequate, as the whole road needed to be widened to deal with the volume of traffic on the road. He also said that public transport needed to be increased to serve the N84 route.

Cllr. Noone said that all improvement works were welcome and he referred to the adverse weather conditions which had occurred during the previous months which had resulted in deterioration of local roads in the District.

Mr. Cullen, in reply to the Members, said that the function of the Local Authority was to spend the funding available in a cost-effective manner and he said that if certain projects are not completed, this is down to lack of funding. He informed the Members that an application had been made to the Department for additional funding for roads, and a response to this application is awaited.

Mr. Mitchell addressed the Members and outlined the plans for spending the grant allocation of €20m on road improvements and the allocation of €3.3m on road maintenance.

He outlined that there was a reduction of €1 million for discretionary funding due to the reduction of the Local Property Tax for 2018, however he said that a supplementary grant which was received would help to increase funding available for discretionary spending.

He informed the Members that the Community Involvement Schemes would be advertised shortly, with a budget of €10m and he said that applications must be with the Department by the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2018.

Mr. Mitchell outlined details of proposed funding for the Municipal District in addition to the Local, Regional and Town maintenance funding, as follows:

Tertiary Roads: €80,549.

Village Upgrade Scheme, Athenry: €250,000

Athenry Relief Road: €25,000

Road Drainage Measures: €62,326

Mr. Gavin outlined the proposals for the Improvement and Restoration grants.

Cllr. Noone thanked the officials for their work in preparing the Municipal District Schedule of Works including the Roads Programme, commenting that the officials were doing their best within the funding available.

Cllr. Kinane said she did not agree that the reduction in the Local Property Tax rate for 2018 had caused cut backs on funding for local roads. However, she said she was pleased that a number of roads she had lobbied for were included in the Draft Roads Programme. She acknowledged the work of the Council officials in preparing the Document.

Cllr. Kearney thanked the Council Staff, both in the Municipal District Office and the outdoor Staff, for the work they carry out on road maintenance, given the limited resources available.

Cllr. Cuddy welcomed that the Council had applied to the Department for additional funding for roadworks and he expressed the view that additional staff should be employed by the Council to deal with roads issues, such as pot holes and flooding. He also raised the issue of speed limits on local roads, which he said need to be reduced.

Cllr. Charity expressed the view that the people of the County are not getting a fair return from Central Government in respect of car tax, Local Property Tax etc. which they pay. He said there is a continuing deterioration of roads due to bad weather and additional funding

should be made available to repair these roads. He said he had reservations that the funding being made available for Bawnmore Cross would be adequate.

Cllr. Feeney said that it was the worst winter he had witnessed and that the Council never receive adequate funding for its needs. He welcomed that the Council has some discretion in relation to spending, however he said this is to change in a number of years. He said he hoped that the relief Road in Athenry would be completed shortly to allow further investment in the town.

Cllr. Cronnelly also complemented the Council staff on their hard work, but he said he was frustrated that the taxes collected in the County are not directed for spending in the County.

Cllr. Noone said that the local roads are in a bad state due to the volume of traffic and the bad weather. He said that Oireachtas Members have a responsibility to look for more funding rather than approaching the Council requesting to get works done without adequate funding being provided.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Kinane, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kearney, the Members **AGREED** to adopt the Schedule of Works 2018, including the Roads Programme, for the Municipal District of Athenry Oranmore.

Mr. Cullen thanked the Members for their positive comments and he said he looked forward to a favourable outcome to the upcoming meeting between Cllrs. Kinane and Cuddy and Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

**Item No. 3: To discuss the Chief Executive's Report on Submissions received on the Proposed Variation No 2 (a) and 2 (b) to the Galway County Development Plan 2015 – 2021.**  
**(AOMD 1803)**

Cllr. Noone said that Ms. Loughnane, Senior Executive Planner and Mr. Dunne, Assistant Planner, had sent their apologies, as they were unable attend the Meeting but they had indicated that they would be available to meet with Councillors before the Plenary Council Meeting on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018. The Members welcomed the opportunity to meet with the Planners before the Council Meeting.

Mr. Timmins asked that any comments, observations or changes Members would like to make on the Plan be submitted to the Forward Planning Section by 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018 so same could be assessed and dealt with at the Council Meeting on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

Ms. Fox explained that the Claregalway Plan was previously a stand-alone Plan but is now included in the Gaeltacht Plan No. 2(b) of the County Development Plan. She said that by including the Claregalway Plan into the County Development Plan (CDP), it will be reviewed

every 6 years and the review process for the County Development Plan will commence again in 2019. She explained that in order to stay within the Core Strategy of the CDP, 7 hectares of land can be zoned as R1 lands, therefore if Members wish to zone alternative lands R1, this will need to be adjusted elsewhere. She stated that the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy will be released in early 2019 and this may show an increase in population requirements for Claregalway.

Cllr. Cuddy felt that the Core Settlement Plan should be revisited. He outlined that there is a requirement for residential development, but he said there is a treatment plant available in Claregalway which is not being used.

Cllr. Kearney said that in line with the Core Strategy, only 7 hectares of land can be zoned as R1 lands. He stated that this is too restrictive, on one hand there is a need for housing but on another hand it is restricting where houses can be built. He commented that his understanding of the Plan is that the 7 hectares can be adjusted within the area once the Local Authority does not exceed the limit, e.g. could R1 lands zoned in the Lackagh area be allocated to the Claregalway area instead where same can be used. He suggested that this would be clarified by the Department.

Cllr. Feeney outlined that An Bord Pleanála are refusing planning applications unless there is an MD treatment plant as these are being maintained by Irish Water. He said that there are only a handful of areas where houses can be built and in some cases people do not want to live in some of these areas. He stated that the Claregalway area is very popular due to its location and the fact there is a treatment plant available, it should be used. He commented that the R1 lands zoned on the map for Claregalway appears very low. He stated that he would be surprised if the Department did not allow a larger area be zoned as R1 in this location as there is a requirement for more houses. He said that he is aware of National Policy but he feels they would allow discretion in this particular case.

Cllr. Charity asked if something could be done to entice builders to progress with vacant or unfinished houses in Claregalway. He also commented that the R1 lands zoned for Claregalway were very low.

Cllr. Noone said that a balance is required. He stated that builders feel it is very expensive to build at present. He asked about the changes to be introduced regarding the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy and asked what R1 lands will be available as a result. He said that additional houses would add to the traffic problems existing in Claregalway and that it is essential that a relief road is provided at Claregalway. He expressed the view that infrastructure should be part of the planning process.

Ms. Fox outlined that the 7 hectares is not a cap and that if R1 lands do not come forward or are not built upon within the lifetime of the Plan, then R2 lands would be used, and the 7 ha is not an absolute limit. In relation to the allocation population re zoning, the Council is currently waiting on feedback from the Northern & Western Regional Assembly but would envisage a larger population allocation moving forward in respect of Claregalway, which would be welcomed by the Planning Authority due to the availability of a waste water treatment plant and proximity to the City. She said that there is the safeguard of R2 lands within the Plan which can be used if required, for example if R1 land is not being progressed and a developer proposes to build on R2 lands, then same can be applied for, but reasons why the R1 lands cannot be used will be required. In reply to queries on the Core Strategy, she said these could be discussed with Ms. Loughnane and Mr. Dunne. With regard to the Inner Relief Road, she said this was already contained within Chapter 5 of the CDP and its repetition was not necessary within this variation.

Cllr. Noone queried if landowners are notified at any stage that their lands are being zoned and what happens if they do not want their lands zoned. Mr. Timmins explained that if landowners have no interest in developing their lands, then this will be reviewed and changed as the aim is to maximise development.

Cllr. Cuddy queried if land is zoned for a particular purpose and not used, if it is for the life of that Plan. Ms. Fox explained that during the review process of a Plan, previous zonings are examined to determine what lands were zoned and determine if any planning applications were made on these lands or if there is potential for development on the lands. Ms. Fox explained that landowners had the opportunity to make submissions regarding their land both at the pre-draft and draft stages and these are considered and examined by Planners when preparing zoning maps.

Mr. Timmins said that this item will be on the agenda for the Council Meeting on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018. He said that any submissions or observations that Members would like to make in relation to same should be submitted to the Forward Planning Section by Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018.

Cllr. Noone commented that following this stage, a final Plan will need to come before the Members and it could take approximately six months before the variation is effective and that a review of the County Development Plan would commence again in 2019.

In reply to Cllr. Noone, Ms. Fox confirmed that the variation would need to be approved in full.

**Notice of Motion – Cllr. M. Kinane**

*I, Cllr Martina Kinane wish to propose that Galway County Council undertake a LED Retrofit of Oranmore's existing Public Lighting with the aim of improving lighting levels around the town*

The following written reply was given:

*The approved Public Lighting Budget for 2018 does not include the provision of funding to allow for an LED Retrofit of existing Public Lighting in Oranmore. Galway County Council made a successful application to the SEAI in 2017 for grant assistance funding for energy efficient public lighting retrofit projects. This funding facilitated the replacement of a total of 130 street lights with LED units at a number of locations around the County, to include 26 no. in Oranmore Village. It is the intention of the Council to make a similar grant funding application to SEAI in 2018. Should such a funding application prove successful, it will be directed towards the replacement of high energy consumption public lights which provide the greatest energy saving and therefore the fastest payback on investment. In this regard, suitable public lighting within Oranmore Village may be considered for replacement, subject to the above-mentioned application being successful.*

**Notice of Motion – Cllr. M. Kinane**

*I, Cllr Martina Kinane wish to propose that a Rapid Information Alert mechanism be set up within the Athenry/Oranmore Municipal District to provide Business owners/ key holders and all other interested parties with essential contact details and information required to deal with Flooding / Ice Snow events in the form of a WhatsApp group/ Text Alert*

The following written reply was given:

*Met Eireann and Galway County Council issue weather alerts over the national and local airwaves and via Social Media. Athenry/Oranmore Municipal District will not be providing an additional text alert system. Any issues resulting from inclement weather should be forwarded to the Athenry/Oranmore District Office.*

Cllr. Kinane expressed her dissatisfaction with this response.

Mr. Cullen replied that the Council has an Emergency Plan in place and he said there are varying levels of responses to different emergencies and incidents. He said that while he acknowledges Cllr. Kinane's concerns, he is fully satisfied that the Emergency Plan in place is appropriate.



## **Notice of Motion – Cllr. M. Kinane**

*I, Cllr Martina Kinane wish to propose that Galway County Council apply for funding from The Office of Public Works (under the Minor Flood Mitigation works and Coastal Protection scheme) to repair the walkway from Galway Bay Sailing Club out to Rinville Point following the recent Storm Eleanor*

The following written reply was given:

*The section of walkway referred to is not under the ownership of Galway County Council and therefore the Council is not responsible for its maintenance.*

## **Item No. 5 Municipal District Director's Business & Correspondence (AOMD 1805)**

The following items of correspondence were circulated to each Member with the Agenda:

Letter from Transport Infrastructure Ireland dated the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017, regarding Motion submitted in regard to signage for Clarinbridge and Kilcolgan on the M18 on the approaches to Kiltiernan.

Letter from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, dated the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017, regarding Motion submitted in regard to signage for Claregalway in the English language on the Motorway – Junction 19.

Letter from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, dated the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2017, regarding Motion submitted in regard to signage for Claregalway in the English language on the Motorway – Junction 19.

In reply to Cllr. Kearney, Mr. Owens said that while an acknowledgement had been received in respect of the Council's Motion that signage for Claregalway in the English language be displayed on the M17 Motorway, no further reply had been received to date. He said that under legislation, in particular the Official Languages Act 2003, Gaeltacht placenames can only be displayed in Irish on signage, regardless of the location of the sign.

Cllr. Kinane said she would discuss the signage on the Motorway at the Meeting with T.I.I.

Cllr. Kearney said that there was no town mentioned on the signage off the new Motorway for the villages along the old N63 such as Turloughmore, Abbeyknockmoy, Mountbellew and Ballygar. He said that the only location mentioned is Roscommon, which is not in the County. He said this was regrettable.

Mr. Mitchell said that legislation guides signage issues on the motorways, but he would bring the matter up with the T.I.I.

**Item No. 6 Cathaoirleach's Business**

**(AOMD 1806)**

Mr. Mitchell said he hoped that the new drainage fund would deal with some of the flooding issues and that the flooding issue at Claregalway would be incorporated into the traffic calming scheme.

He said that Carrowmoneash Estate in Oranmore is a private estate, and costings would be taken for the flooding issues on the Coast Road, Oranmore, which are generally localised. Mr. Mitchell said that while there are no definite plans for spending the drainage funding, he hopes this amount will be supplemented at a later date.

Cllr. Feeney welcomed the new drainage funding and he said he hoped that the flood outside Lisheenkyle National School could be dealt with under this funding, as this problem has existed for a long number of years. He also asked that the flooding on the Gloves to Carnakelly Road be examined.

Cllr. Charity asked when the proposed pedestrian crossing at Corrandulla would be constructed and Mr. Gavin replied that when the weather improves and the road maintenance issues are dealt with, the Council will be in a position to commence works at this location.

**CRIOCHNAIGH AN CRUINIÚ ANSIN**

SIGNED: *Clk M. J. Moran*  
CATHAOIRLEACH.  
10/4/18.