

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara **Municipal District of Conamara**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held at the Council Chamber, Aras an Chontae, Galway on the 13th of September 2018 @ 10.00 a.m

ILATHAIR:

Baill:

Cllr. N. Thomas Cathaoirleach, S. O’Cualain
S. Walsh, E. Mannion, T. Ó Cuarraoin,
N. Byrne, T. Welby, S. O’Tuairisg, T. Healy

Oifigigh:

G. Mullarkey, Head of Finance
J. Cullen DOS Infrastructure & Operations
M. Owens, A/DOS, Housing.
D. Mitchell, S.E Infrastructure & Operations
P. Breathnach, S.E.E Conamara
T.J Redmond, Area Engineer, N. Conamara
V. Loughnane, Senior Planner, Planning
H. Fox, Assistant Planner, Planning
B. Corcoran, Assistant Planner, Planning
C. Hannon, A.S.O, Planning
S. Groarke, Meetings Administrator

Apologies:

1. Minutes of the MD of Conamara Meeting held on the 7-6-2018 **CMD 18033**

The adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 7-6-2018 was proposed by Cllr. T. O’Curraoin and seconded by Cllr. T. Welby.

2. Matters arising from the Minutes **CMD 18034**

Comh. S. O’Tuairisg clarified item 5 on page 2 in regard to the notification sent to Inis Meáin concerning the re-establishment of the Islands Committee -he stated that he was advised by

Maire Ni Chionna that all the Comharchumann had been notified. Cllr. T. Healy welcomed the repair works done on the N59 between Maam Cross-Clifden but advised that repair works still had to be undertaken at Streamstown. D.Mitchell advised him that the contractor is scheduled to commence the works on the 25th of September.

3. Declaration of Roads to be Public Roads-Section 11 Roads Act 1993 **CMD 18035**

On the proposal of Cllr. T. Welby, seconded by Cllr. N. Byrne the road pavement and footpath at the Owenriff Park Estate, Oughterard was declared to be a Public Road.

On the proposal of Cllr. T. Welby, seconded by Cllr. N. Byrne the road at the Townland of An Chathair was declared to be a Public Road

4. Plans to Progress the Conamara Greenway **CMD 18036**

J. Cullen referred to the strategy launched by the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport on the 20-7-2018 in regard to the future development of National & Regional Greenways. He stated that the deadline for the receipt of applications is the 30-11-2018 and funding of €53 m has been provided by this Department. He advised that planning is in place for the Regional Greenway between Clifden -Oughterard but there is no planning permission for Galway -Oughterard and the Council is currently working on this. He spoke of the need to accelerate the process. Cllr. E. Mannion referred to the further works required for the Clifden -Oughterard section and stated that the Greenway in Waterford has provided a major boost to tourism. She advised of the positive outcome in regard to the negotiations with the 26 landowners at Ballinafad. Cllr. N. Byrne advised of the need to listen and take into consideration the concerns of the landowners and urged caution and due diligence in regard to the process. Cllr. T. Welby enquired as regards the previous application for funding and its status and referred to the need for signage on the Ballinahinch section. Cllr. T. Healy enquired if anything changed as a result of the new strategy and advised of the need for a positive engagement with the landowners in order to achieve consensus. He stated that the landowners have valid concerns and he is concerned about the pressure that may be applied to them. Comh. T. O'Curraoin referred to previous meetings held with landowners in Oughterard and outlined the problems they have as regards losing part of their small holdings and large numbers of people having access to their private property. He referred to the large volume of traffic on the N59 and the need for a new road-he advised of the need for a plan to incorporate a new road, walkway, cycleway and railway line. Cllr. N. Thomas referred to the €2.2 m funding allocation from the Department of Transport for the Clifden - Oughterard part of the Greenway a few years ago and the need for positive engagement with the landowners to accelerate the process. He advised that Kurt Lydon had tried his best in the past but permissive access was the only option at the time and he had nothing to negotiate with as he was not permitted to deviate from the route of the old railway line. He advised that there is a more positive outlook with the new strategy. Comh. S. O'Cualáin advised of the importance of dealing with the landowners in a constructive way in order to get them on board. J. Cullen advised that the strategy provides extra measures which will enable the Council to engage with the landowners in a meaningful way. He stated that the Council will submit an application and seek funding for the Galway-Oughterard section of the proposed Greenway. He advised also that he will discuss with Fáilte Ireland the use of the funding provided by them for the completion of the Clifden and Ballinahinch sections.

5 Update-Footbridge at Oughterard

CMD 18037

J. Cullen explained that the Council has to undertake a Stage 2 ecological assessment in regard to the pearl mussel habitat and the results will determine whether any further assessment will be required. He advised that the personnel are in place to undertake this and the work is underway. Cllr. N. Byrne enquired if the ecological assessment is for the road bridge and not just the footbridge. She referred to meetings with the community and advised that a safety audit in regard to the school children is a priority. She welcomed progress on the matter. Cllr. N. Thomas advised that it is important to keep up momentum on the project and this was supported by Cllr. E. Mannion. Comh. T. O'Curraoin stated that it appears to him that the pearl mussel is given priority over the safety of children. Cllr. T. Healy agreed that there is a major safety issue with the volume of traffic on the N59 and hoped that the assessment will go well. J. Cullen advised that the persons undertaking the work have been approved by NPWS and the ecological assessment will be beneficial. He stated that the Council wants to get the project advanced and this requires a step by step approach.

6. An Spidéal- Shorewalk

CMD 18038

Following the meeting with the deputation from the community at Spiddal D. Mitchell advised that the Council had secured the land along the 4km route from landowners by dedication apart from the 80m stretch. The scheme is funded by the Department of Community & Rural Affairs. He advised that the Council will examine details of the ownership of the land in question and also the issue concerning the foreshore. It will check if the land extends to the boundary of the foreshore. He stated that the best way to progress the matter is to secure agreement with the landowner and that obtaining a Foreshore License may take considerable time. Comh. S. O'Tuairisg advised that all efforts have been exhausted to get agreement with the landowner who appears to have concerns with anti-social behavior if he permits access through his land.

7. Update on the R-336

CMD 18039

J. Cullen advised that the Department had originally agreed to fund the planning stages of the R-336 but the process remains in limbo and a procedure will need to be put in place to complete the route selection process and bring it to a conclusion and identify an emerging preferred route. He stated that he will consult with the Department in regard to seeking approval for funding to re-engage the Consultants. The Council will instruct the Consultants with a view to having a presentation on the routes by the end of January 2019 and he hoped that funding will be approved for this. Comh. S. O'Tuairisg advised that this process has been going on since 2006 with an initial selection of 3 routes. He stated that it is vital to get rid of the existing routes and have an emerging preferred route by the target of January 2019. He referred to the Brown Route and advised that there is not much hope of advancing this in light of the planning decisions made on the N59 and the problem associated with the SAC designations. He advised with the aid of a map that another route should be examined which would take a lot of traffic off the existing R-336 and which avoids the SAC designations. This route consists of the N59 from the City to the Moycullen Bypass-to tie in with the road at Cloosh where Coillte and SSE Renewables have wind turbines-to the road at Seanapleastín-to the Oughterard -Rossaveal Road. This route can also serve Rossaveal and

the area to the west. Comh. S. O’Cualáin advised that alternative routes and solutions should be examined. He explained that traffic usually gets bad around Furbo-Barna and recommended that the route out from Ragoon to the Golf Club to the Spiddal-Moycullen road should be considered as regards upgrading-this will also take traffic away from the R-336. The upgrading of the road west of Spiddal can then be examined. He advised that with the existing routes in place there is total uncertainty and people cannot sell houses. Comh. T. O’Curraoin also recommended the viability of considering the upgrading of the existing Ragoon-Golf Club-Spiddal/Moycullen Road. He enquired as to why Coillte can build roads to serve their lands and the wind turbine sites and the Council cannot-there appears to be 2 rules as regards the SAC designations. He stated that he is totally opposed to people’s houses being knocked in regard to the proposed new City Bypass. Cllr. E. Mannion advised that the Brown Route which a majority of the Councillors voted for is not a viable option. She enquired if the Councillors have power to pick a route and get rid of the existing routes. Cllr. N. Thomas enquired if the upgrading of existing routes is an option and if there is a decision to go for different routes -does other optional routes also have to be considered. J. Cullen advised that there may be difficulties with upgrades and the Council has to base that route selection process on sound engineering principles. He advised that the original process was to complete the planning procedure for a new road for Conamara and get it through Bord Pleanála. He stated that the Department will not support the development of this road if the Council does not back a viable route.

8. Social Housing in Rural Areas

CMD 18040

Comh. S. O’Tuairisg referred to the fact that the Council has not submitted a proposal for a Social Housing Scheme for Carna because it apparently does not meet the criteria set out in the Department’s directive/guidelines -as it appears there are insufficient applicants for social housing in the area. It appears that to get social housing people have to move out of the Gaeltacht areas. This amounts to depopulation of the Gaeltacht and other rural areas as people are forced to live in the towns and decline sets in with the closure of rural Schools, Post Offices and Garda Stations. He advised that he is amazed by the Department policy in regard to providing social housing in the Gaeltacht and rural areas and proposed that a meeting be sought with Minister Damien English and senior officials to receive a deputation from the Council in order to get clarification on this. His proposal was seconded by Comh. S. O’Cualáin. Comh. T. O’Curraoin referred to a meeting in Cill Chiaráin where the community raised their concerns about the lack of employment and facilities in the area-there is a need to keep the people in the area especially the youth. He stated that people in the area would be willing to donate land where single rural houses can be built. Comh. S. O’Cualáin advised that people from Gaeltacht areas have to move out of the area to get social housing- he cited the fact that people from Lettermore/Lettermullen have to move to Oughterard. He advised that the policy whereby social housing could be built on peoples’ land worked well in the past. The fact that people donated the site did not mean that they got the house free gratis as it remained Council property and the tenants had to pay rent. He stated that the social housing policy for rural areas has serious repercussions for the Gaeltacht which is under severe pressure and he cited the fact that Carna-Cashel has a problem with GAA numbers. Cllr. T. Healy agreed that the policy whereby young people could get social housing built on their parents land was good for the local rural communities. He referred to the problem associated with outsiders purchasing a lot of properties in Conamara which remain empty for most of the year and this results in property prices beyond the reach of local people. Cllr. N. Byrne advised that she supported Comh. O’Tuairisg’s proposal and referred to the meeting held in Cill Chiaráin and the problems raised concerning the lack of infrastructure and facilities in rural areas, the decrease in the number of pupils attending the local schools and the decline of

the Irish language. Cllr. T. Welby advised that social houses which are built on a site provided by the tenants or their relatives revert back to the Council when they die. He requested M. Owens to explain the policy in regard to providing social housing in rural areas.

M. Owens advised that the Council's proposals are assessed by the Department of Housing in accordance with the policy framework set out in documentation such as Rebuilding Ireland and the Action Plan for the Homeless. The Department assess proposals in accordance with a range of criteria and thresholds for funding including the profile of the housing need established for the area, the facilities and infrastructure including land available, the alternatives available and the expectation of full occupancy in the long term. He explained that the housing need for the Carna area is 24 houses -3/4 of which would be 1-2 bedroom properties and this constitutes 2% of the overall need. He advised that there is no land bank in Carna and that proposals to provide sufficient numbers of social housing on available suitable sites allows the Council to meet the criteria- the existing housing need in Carna does not meet the criteria. He stated that the Department focus is on facilities in urban areas which results in long term occupancy. He advised that a significant number of proposals have been approved by the Department for Conamara-these include 23 units at Clifden, 30 units at Moycullen, 14 units at Roundstone, 10 units at Oughterard and 5 units for the elderly at Carraroe. He also explained that the Department have approved 6 single rural dwellings on the basis of exceptional circumstances i.e medical/disability need. He stated that he had a meeting with the Minister Eoghan Murphy T.D the previous week and had previously met Minister Damien English. He advised that there are limited resources for the development of single rural dwellings. Cllr. E. Mannion welcomed the Part 8 approval for the 23 Social Housing units at Clifden and the 14 units at Roundstone and referred to the meeting with the Minister for Housing at the Council. She also referred to the fact that the new Housing Agency is being launched today and enquired if it can do anything for the Gaeltacht as regards its housing need. Cllr. N. Byrne advised that people should have a right to live in the Gaeltacht areas where there is unique situation and the current policy amounts to discrimination-the fact that there is no land bank facility at Carna should not come into it. Comh. S. O'Cualáin referred to the fact that the next social housing estate nearest Carna is at Roundstone which is outside the Gaeltacht and 20 miles away. Cllr. N. Thomas referred to what he described as an emotional meeting at Cill Chiaráin and the need to stem the flow of the decline of the population in the Gaeltacht. He referred to the fact that the Department need assurances that proposed social housing will result in long term occupancy and that once off social housing are provided for tenants with exceptional need such as disability- he enquired if there is a way to expand the policy to cater for the need of young parents in rural areas. M. Owens referred to the role of the new Housing Agency and advised that its initial focus will be on urban areas especially in Dublin. Comh. S. O'Tuairisg stated that families are being forced to move out of Carna and the explanation concerning the policy is not acceptable to him as it does not address the issue. He advised that his proposal still stands and there is a need to have a meeting with the Department and Minister for Housing on this issue. His proposal was agreed by the elected members.

9. Draft Clifden Local Area Plan 2018-2024

CMD 18041

Ms. Loughnane advised that the Draft Clifden Local Area Plan 2018-2024 was placed on public display for 6 weeks, from Friday the 6th July 2018 until Friday 17th August 2018. She stated that 21 submissions had been received within the public consultation period and that the full contents of each submission had been considered in the preparation of the Chief Executive's

Report. She explained that the Chief Executives Report would be circulated to members in the coming days and that same would be on the agenda for the September meeting of Plenary Council, i.e. 24th September 2018.

Ms. Fox pointed out that a public consultation drop in session was held in Clifden Library on Thursday 19th July 2018 which was well attended by approx. 20 people. She explained that the feedback from the consultation was very positive with overall support towards the Clifden Local Area Plan 2018-2024. She referred to the 21 submissions received on the Draft Plan and stated that some were received from prescribed authorities and some from the general public. She advised that each submission would be detailed in the Chief Executives Report.

Cllr. Healy stated that there had been no major change in the Plan and he would hope that the lands zoned would be used, in particular that the business sites on the Galway Road would be developed on.

Cllr. Mannion pointed out that the public consultation was very successful, she highlighted that it was important that people engage in the process. She also stated that it was important that development takes place, Clifden is a major tourism town with not much housing available. She stated that she hoped the land would be developed on.

Ms. Fox explained that like previous plans written proposed amendments should be submitted to the Forward Planning Section in advance of the Council meeting in order to allow time to assess same and ensure that everything is accurate so there would be no confusion on the day of Council meeting.

Ms. Loughnane then referred to the current Strategic Housing Development application in relation to Bearna. She explained that a report had to be made by Galway County Council before the 25th September 2018 on same. She highlighted that the closing date for general submissions was the 3rd September 2018, 20 submissions had been lodged towards the application. She highlighted that this particular development had been previously refused twice. She asked members if they would like to add any comments to be included in the report to An Bord Pleanála by Galway County Council. She summarised that the development being proposed was on 7.19 hectares of land located at Truskey East, Bearna. She stated that the land was zoned residential phase 1. She advised that it was previously refused, one of the reasons for same was due to density, she explained that the previous application was for 113 units and the application currently with the Bord was for 197 residential units. She summarised that this would make it 35 units per hectare and that 40 units would be reserved for the Irish language clause. She also advised members that the application was still available for viewing on An Bord Pleanála's website.

Cllr. Welby referred to the density which was previously 113 units and now 197 units. He queried how same compares to the County Strategy. Ms. Loughnane explained that the Board had considered the density low quoting the Department's quota. She advised that the Board would look at the guidelines and Variation No. 2a Galway County Development Plan 2015-

2021, Bearna Plan. She explained that there were other issues that need to be considered re roads etc. She also explained that developments in the County are required to be in line with the Local Area Plan guidelines re density, same will be reviewed in line with the County Development Plan in 2019 by Galway County Council.

Cllr. N. Byrne pointed out that if similar densities were to be used then it would exaggerate all the problems that Galway County Council currently have with the infrastructure in Connemara. Ms. Loughnane confirmed that the Planning Authority has to go in line with the Local Area Plan which is adopted by members.

10. Requirement for full time Engineer-Carraroe

CMD 18042

Cllr. N. Thomas referred to the fact that a number of staff assigned to the role of Area Engineer based in Carraroe have departed after a short period and never remain in the position for long. D. Mitchell advised that the previous Engineer got a more senior position in another organization and staff are getting more opportunities now. He confirmed that an offer has been made to a replacement but the Council has not received a start date yet. He stated that the constant change in staff is frustrating and the matter was discussed at Plenary Council. He advised that there is a number of vacancies in the Infrastructure & Operations section and they are working with HR on this. Comh. S. O’Cualáin advised that the problem is associated with the pay scale and the lack of funding provided to the Area Offices. Comh. S. O’Tuairisg enquired as to why Carraroe is different to other areas and advised that the existing grade would need to be reviewed and the position made permanent. Cllr. T. Healy referred to the wages being offered in the private sector. G. Mullarkey advised that the pay scales are set by the Department.

11. Municipal District Director’s Business

CMD 18043

G. Mullarkey advised of the forthcoming Municipal District budget meeting which will be scheduled in October.

12. Cathaoirleach’s Business

MD 18044

Cllr. N. Thomas referred to 3 items that require attention which are: 1. the filter lights at Moycullen change too fast resulting in drivers remaining on the junction box. 2. Problem with dips on the Barna Road- claims that the Council is not doing anything. 3. Problem with flooding at the nursing home at Moycullen-attempts were made to free it. D. Mitchell advised that P. Breathnach will take note of this.

13. AOB

MD 18045

Cllr. N. Byrne advised that due to her school timetable she had a problem getting time off for the meeting today and that she is free to attend meetings on Monday and Friday afternoons. She requested a degree of flexibility as regards scheduling meetings and stated that as Cathaoirleach she tried to accommodate everyone. Cllr. N. Thomas advised that the meeting was scheduled today to accommodate the availability of the Cathaoirleach and also to suit the re-established Islands Committee. He stated that Monday and Friday afternoon may not suit everybody but he will look into the matter and try to accommodate Cllr. Byrne as much as possible. Cllr. E. Mannion referred to the part time role of the Councillors and the fact that

some of them are retired and therefore are available for most meetings- she emphasized the importance of encouraging more women to enter public life and to facilitate them. Cllr. S. Byrne advised that Cllr. Byrne had accommodated him in the past as regards meetings.

14. Date & Venue for Next Meeting

MD 18046

D. Mitchell advised that the 3 Year Roads Program and the draft Speed Limits are required for the Agenda for the next meeting and requested that this be held before the Plenary Council Meeting which is scheduled for the 22-10-2018. G. Mullarkey advised that the Municipal District Budget meetings will be scheduled that week. It was agreed that the next Ordinary Meeting would be held at 2.00 p.m on Monday 15-10-2018 at the Council Chamber in Aras an Chontae, Galway.

CROCHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN