

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

**MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT LOUGHREA REGIONAL OFFICES ON
THURSDAY, 17TH JANUARY 2008**

ILATHAIR

Baill:

Cllr. P. Feeney, Chairman
Cllr. B. Willers
Cllr. P. Hynes
Cllr. M. Fahy
Cllr. M. Regan
Cllr. M. Maher

Oifigigh:

Mr. M. Lavelle, Senior Engineer, Roads & Transportation Section
Mr. J. Costello, E.E., Gort Engineering Area
Mr. C. Mitchell, E.E., Portumna Engineering Area
Mr. A. Raftery, E.E., Loughrea Engineering Area
Ms. A. Power, S.S.O., Loughrea Regional Offices

DEPUTATION FROM LEITRIM N.S.

The Chairman welcomed Ms. S. McAuley and Ms. N. Deeley from Leitrim N.S. who requested to address the meeting to highlight and update the Members on the serious safety issues surrounding Leitrim N.S. They stated that there had been a huge increase in the number of pupils attending the school, a trend that was unlikely to be reversed which means the safety and parking issues had and would continue to get worse. They stated that there were 93 pupils in the school and 20 pupils in the Pre-School next door. They informed the Meeting that the Bishop had sanctioned a 3 acre site for provision of a new school adjacent to St. Andrew's Church in Leitrim, with parking facilities included which would be a much safer option. However, the Department of Education have informed the school that realistically this would take at least 10 years as funding was provided for an extension in 2003. They said that in the interim they needed short and medium solutions to the problem. They compiled a DVD which they showed to the meeting which highlighted the serious safety issues that exist for children crossing a busy regional route to and from school. They circulated to the meeting previous correspondence from the Council in relation to same and the Council's recommendation that a dedicated pick-up and set-down area be provided/acquired beside the existing school grounds off the busy regional road. They stated that the lack of land on the same side of the school was a major problem as the land-owner adjoining the school had stated that he would not be interested in disposing of this land to the school. He had been offered a piece of land adjacent to the

Loughrea Area Meeting held on 17th January 2008

school in exchange for a piece of ground adjoining the school but this was also turned down. They referred to the piece of waste ground on the Loughrea side of the school where a suggestion was made that the pick-up and set-down area could be accommodated here. However, the Council had indicated that this was too remote from the school to be accommodated there. They said they were left with a situation now where they had no lands to provide a drop-off facility for the school. They said that a pre-fab unit was being installed to the front of the school in early March to alleviate the over-crowding in the school and that the playing area for the children would be considerably reduced and there would be too many children in too small an area. They informed the Meeting that they have a bus that drops the children off at the school but the children had still to be brought across the busy road to the school.

Cllr. Regan stated that as can be seen from the presentation there was very serious Health & Safety issues here and they needed action urgently. He said that the parking area across from the school was full of pot-holes and there was a huge one directly outside the school gates. However, he said that the main issue was the getting 93 children safely to and from school. He said that a lot of timber lorries and HGV's travel on this road and he suggested that rumble strips be installed at this location to slow down the passing traffic. He said that they needed to have a designated drop-off and pick-up facility and provision of yellow lines. He also referred to the possibility of reducing speed limits at schools but agreed that this would still not solve the problem at this location. He said that it had been suggested at the public meeting held earlier that week that the lands adjoining the school be compulsorily purchased and he asked how long this process would take? Cllr. Hynes asked if it were possible in the circumstances, i.e. on Health & Safety grounds, to initiate the C.P.O. process. Cllr. Maher said that additional signage was required; rumble strips needed to be installed and a long-term plan needed to be put in place. He said the land adjoining the school had to be acquired and asked if it were possible for the Council to C.P.O. the land in the interest of Health & Safety irrespective of the land-owner agreeing to sell it or not. Cllr. Willers queried how an extension was sanctioned for the school in 2003 by the Department of Education when it was obvious that there are no facilities for dropping off children. She agreed that the C.P.O. process was the only answer. Cllr. Fahy said that the Department of Education should be lobbied with regard to provision of a new school. He said that in the meantime a school warden should be employed to get the children safety across the road to the school. Cllr. Feeney also agreed that there was an urgent need for a new school in Leitrim. The Deputation stated that an extension was built on to the school in 2003 which meant that it would be way down in priority for a new school. They also stated that an inspector would be coming to the school shortly and he would be made aware of the safety issues at the school.

Mr. Lavelle stated that Leitrim School was in the same situation as many other schools where there was either none or inadequate parking outside the school for safe access and egress to the School. He said that special Speed Limits had been piloted at one school but it was found not to be effective enough. He said that the cost of these lights was €40,000 per school and the cost to the Council for the whole of the County would be €4m but he said that they were not satisfied that they contributed significantly towards safety. He explained to the Deputation that the Council resources were limited and that every allocation given by the Department was job specific. He said that they didn't have any

discretion to any extent in how the monies were spent. He said that the Department of Education must take on board the requirements of Health and Safety in relation to getting the children safety to and from school. He said that rumble strips were not really suitable where there were houses nearby as they tended to be very noisy and in his opinion were not effective enough. He advised that a C.P.O. could be taken out under the Local Government Act under the common good. However, he said that this process was quite costly. He said that the preparatory works could take up to 6/8 months and if it were appealed to An Bord Pleanala it could take up to a year and a half. He advised that the Council did not have resources available to do this. He said that there were many other schools in a similar position. He said that the school was the responsibility of the Department of Education and the Board of Management and that the School Authority was responsible for the safe access and egress from the school. Mr. Lavelle stated that a lot of the interim measures that had been carried out (signage, lining and flashing lights) were being ignored and suggested to the Deputation that they move on the C.P.O. process as this was the best way forward. Cllr. Hynes queried if the Council would consider implementing the C.P.O. process in this case, in the interest of common good, if the cost of it were to be borne by the Board of Management. On the proposal of Cllr. Regan, seconded by Cllr. Feeney, the Members asked that if the school came back and gave an undertaking to underwrite the cost of the C.P.O. and off-set the land the school owns in exchange, that the Council would consider initiating the C.P.O. process for the lands adjoining Leitrim School. Mr. Lavelle agreed that he would discuss the matter with the Director of Roads. He explained that the Council did not have funding to initiate the C.P.O. process themselves but if the School Authority agreed to underwrite the costs of the C.P.O., they may consider it. He said that that policy should be broadened out to other schools as well as it could bring adjoining landowners to change their minds about disposing of land for parking and the provision of drop off/pick up facilities at schools. Cllr. Willers proposed that an estimate of the cost of resurfacing the parking area across the road from the school be prepared and suggested that the Members could contribute towards the cost of these works. This was seconded by Cllr. Feeney. Referring to Cllr. Regan's query regarding the parking area across from the school which were covered in pot-holes, Mr. Raftery said that he would look into the matter.

The Deputation then left the Meeting.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29TH NOVEMBER 2007

Matters Arising

Oxgrove Bridge

Cllr. Maher queried the up-to-date position on proposed works to Oxgrove Bridge. Mr. Mitchell stated that the road markings were in place and that the poles and signs would be erected in early February.

Bus Stops

Cllr. Maher stated that they needed to deal with this issue as there was a lot of confusion in town as to where the official bus stop was and asked for up-date on same.

Mr. Lavelle stated that subsequent to the last meeting, talks were held with representatives of the different bus companies that go through Loughrea and both City-Link and Healy Buses had agreed not to come through the town anymore and their official stop was on the Dublin Road as was agreed when the works were being carried out on Main Street. He suggested that bus stops be located at the following locations:

- (a) The existing bus-stop on eastern approach (Dublin Road) to Loughrea near McGoverns
- (b) Station Road Car-Park – Main terminus
- (c) Western approach – near proposed Leisure Centre site

Cllr. Hynes asked if the Council would consider the provision of a footpath that would link from St. Laurence's Fields through to the N66 via the proposed Leisure Centre site which would mean that the people at that end of the town would not have far to go to the bus stop. Mr. Lavelle stated that expenditure on footpaths was very poor and presently there was no funding for this. Mr. Lavelle stated that he would ask Mr. Cullen about the possibility of front-loading the provision of a pedestrian link at this location as part of the swimming pool development. In reply to Cllr. Hynes, Mr. Lavelle advised that they were requesting the bus companies to contribute towards bus shelters. The Members agreed the locations of the bus stops and Mr. Lavelle stated that he would come back to them with an update at a subsequent meeting.

Taxis

In reply to Cllr. Maher, Mr. Lavelle stated that the Taxi Regulator was responsible for granting of taxi licences for the city and county. He said that they had not been asked to-date to designate a location for a taxi-rank in Loughrea. However, he said that the optimum location that he would be recommending would be near Station Road car-park as it would make sense to have it near the main bus stop. The Members agreed with this recommendation.

Gort Chamber of Commerce

Cllr. Fahy referred to the serious parking problems in Gort Town. He said that the recent traffic management plan implemented in the town would go in some way in helping the situation but as the volume of traffic has increased there was an urgent need for the provision of a car-park in the centre of town. He suggested that the Council should liaise with the local Parish Priest regarding the possibility of utilising Canon Quinn Park as a car-park for the town. He said over the past number of years there had been a lot of anti-social behaviour taking place at this location and suggested that as part of the works that CCTV cameras be installed which would help alleviate the anti-social problems at this

location. He said that it was an area that should be vigorously sought after by the Council. Mr. Lavelle stated that the Council were in negotiations with the Church Authorities regarding same. He said that if negotiations went according to plan, he would be requesting that the Members give unanimous support when the time would come for converting this area to a car-park. On the proposal of Cllr. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. Willers, it was proposed that the Council would pursue Canon Quinn Park as a car-park. Mr. Lavelle stated that they had been in negotiations with other land-owners but none were found to be suitable. He advised that the traffic management plan was the first stage of the implementation of traffic control but when Pay & Display was implemented this seemed to solved a lot of the traffic problems in towns. Cllr. Feeney stated that it was a great system but that it was very important to have a long-term car-park in place prior to Pay & Display being implemented.

Outdoor Staffing

Cllr. Fahy asked what the position was in relation to replacing staff that were either retired or on long-term sick leave. He proposed that any positions that have not been filled to-date and that arise out of retirements be filled as a matter of urgency. Cllr. Regan queried why it took so long to replace staff that had retired. In relation to Loughrea Area, Mr. Raftery stated that a report had been sent to Mr. Dolly, S.E. regarding the staffing levels in Loughrea. He stated they had to be mindful of the budgets within their control and had to match the numbers accordingly. Cllr. Regan stated that there were new positions created within the administrative grades and that it would be more beneficial if the existing outdoor staff numbers were retained and retired outdoor staff replaced as quickly as possible. Mr. Lavelle stated that it was up to Human Resources Department to set up panels for each grade. Cllr. Fahy asked that the Chairman contact the County Secretary to have this matter raised at the next Council Meeting. This was seconded by Cllr. Maher.

On the proposal of Cllr. Maher, seconded by Cllr. Fahy, the Minutes of the Loughrea Area Committee Meeting held on the 29th November 2007 were confirmed.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13TH DECEMBER 2007

Matters Arising

N6 to N66 Link Road, Loughrea

Cllr. Willers referred to her proposal at the last meeting in relation to the imposition of a development levy in Loughrea in order to facilitate the purchase of the land to enable the developments on the link road between the N6 and N66 (Gort Road) and queried how they could move forward on this.

Mr. Lavelle stated that this could be included as a submission as part of the Review of the County Development Plan which was ongoing. He said that it was also possible to

Loughrea Area Meeting held on 17th January 2008

introduce Special Infrastructural Levies which can be levied in specific towns through the Local Area Plan, which was done recently in Athenry. In order to progress this further, he suggested that the Members raise this proposal for the imposition of a Special Infrastructural Levy at the next Council Meeting. Cllr. Regan suggested that as part of the levy that the Developer should also have to do part of the road as well. He said that otherwise it may take too long to raise the necessary funding to have the link road completed. Mr. Lavelle advised that the imposition of a Planning Contribution Scheme was the first step in this process.

On the proposal of Cllr. Maher, seconded by Cllr. Willers, the Minutes of the Loughrea Area Committee Meeting held on the 13th December 2007 were confirmed.

TEMPORARY CLOSING OF ROADS – GALWAY INTERNATIONAL RALLY 2008

Report dated 14th January 2008 had been circulated to each Member which included a revised application with the main amendments relating to the order and timing of the stages of the rally. Mr. Lavelle advised that one objection was received within the relevant time-frame. He stated that it was intended to grant the temporary road closures, subject to conditions that adequately addressed the following:-

- Indemnity to Galway County Council against all and any expenses, costs, claims etc. arising from the rally, including an indemnity to Galway County Council under the public and employers liability policies in operation for the duration of the rally.
- Repair of fences/walls damaged in the course of the rally.
- Collection of litter at the spectator stages.
- Road condition survey (video/dvd record of the road surface) to be completed prior to and following the rally.
- Lodgement of a deposit with Galway County Council (sum to be agreed) to be made available to repair any damage to the road network or property owned by Galway County Council caused by the rally.

Mr. Lavelle advised the Meeting that the Ballinasloe Area Committee Members have requested that any Elected Members who are interested travel with the Area Staff to inspect the condition of the roads immediately after the rally. In reply to Cllr. Willers, he said he would check with Mr. Owens, Roads & Transportation Unit in relation to the supply of video on road condition survey prior to and following the rally. In reply to a query regarding the amount of deposit lodged by the Galway Motor Club, Mr. Lavelle stated that he was unaware of the amount of same. The Members noted the Report.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Speed Limits

Mr. Lavelle asked the Members if they had made any decision on what local roads in the Loughrea Electoral Area they recommended in having the speed limits reduced to 50kph. He advised that at the Oranmore Area Committee Meeting the Members proposed that only one of the local roads in their area should remain at 80kph and the rest would be reduced to 50kph. The Ballinasloe Area Committee Members recommended retaining the speed limits on the local roads in their area at 80kph. Mr. Lavelle stated that they needed consistency throughout the county. He said that he needed their consensus as soon as possible. The Members agreed to meet themselves to make a decision on what roads they proposed to reduce the speed limits.

Moyode Woods

Cllr. Hynes referred to a public meeting he attended earlier that week in relation to the proposal for a quarry development at Moyode Woods. He said there was total opposition from all present to any possible quarry development on the Moyode Wood site. He proposed that the Council designate Moyode Woods as a protected area. He said it was proposed at that meeting that a recreation and amenity plan would be prepared for the site to ensure that Moyode Woods is not utilised as a commercial area. This was seconded by Cllr. Maher. Cllr. Hynes stated that this proposal would be going to the Forward Planning Section. Cllr. Feeney suggested that they check with Ms. C. McConnell, Planning to see what powers the Members have in relation to this matter.

Cahernagarry Cross

Cllr. Maher referred to the road down by Cahernagarry Cross which he stated was extremely dangerous. He said the land was available both sides of the road. Mr. Raftery advised that a Community Involvement Scheme would be the best option for this location and that although it was too late for inclusion in the 2008 allocation, he advised that if an application was made in 2009 it would be prioritised.

Tuam Road Bridge

In reply to Cllr. Feeney's query, Mr. Lavelle stated that they would be laying the bitumen macadam when the weather improved. In relation to the timing of the lights, he said that the timing would be altered when they were fully operational.

Next Area Meeting

It was agreed by the Members that the next Area Meeting would be held on Thursday, 7th February 2008 in Loughrea Regional Offices in relation to the Draft County Development Plan.

Chríochnaigh an Cruinniú ansin