

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

**MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT LOUGHREA REGIONAL OFFICES ON
MONDAY, 7TH JULY 2008**

ILATHAIR

Baill:

Cllr. B. Willers, Chairperson
Cllr. P. Feeney
Cllr. M. Fahy
Cllr. P. Hynes
Cllr. W. Burke
Cllr. M. Regan
Cllr. M. Maher
Cllr. G. Burke, Mayor, Loughrea Town Council

Oifigigh:

Mr. J. Cullen, D.O.S., Environment & Water Services Unit
Mr. M. Dolly, S.E., Roads & Transportation Unit
Mr. M. Lavelle, S.E., Roads & Transportation Unit
Ms. C. McConnell, S.E. Planner, Planning & Sustainable Development Unit
Mr. M. Sheil, S.E.E., Loughrea Electoral Area
Mr. J. Costelloe, E.E., Gort Engineering Area
Mr. A. Raftery, E.E., Loughrea Engineering Area
Ms. A. Power, S.S.O., Loughrea Regional Offices

Cllr. Willers explained that Cllr. Feeney had been unavoidably delayed and she would chair the meeting until his arrival.

DEPUTATION FROM KINVARA COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Vice-Chairperson welcomed Ms. M. Heneghan, E. Murphy and Mr. R. Broad to the Meeting. The Deputation stated they wished to raise the following issues:

- Proposed Waste Water (Sewerage) Scheme
- Walkway between Quay and Castle
- Farmers' Market
- Inner Relief Road
- Traffic Management Plan – Traffic Survey

Proposed Waste Water (Sewerage) Scheme

In relation to the proposed Waste Water (Sewerage) Scheme, Mr. Cullen advised that the Preliminary Report for this scheme was approved by the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, and Consultants have been appointed for the next stage of the process. He advised that this would involve the preparation of a Design Review Report and Environmental assessment. He said that these were due to be submitted to the Council in October 2008. Contract Documents would then be prepared and he said that it was hoped to have those prepared by February 2009. He also advised that having regard to the environmental issues, detailed consultations would be required with the National Parks & Wildlife Service. In response to a query about the site, Mr. Cullen advised that a site had been identified as being the preferred site.

Walkway between Quay & Castle

Ms. Murphy stated that they had been granted funding from the Community and Enterprise Unit of the Council for the preparation of a Feasibility Study for the walkway. She advised that they had engaged R. O'Donovan to do this. She requested that they be considered for an extension of time for this project. They stated that it also linked in with the sewerage scheme and requested that pipes would go on the sea side of the walkway. They asked that this request be conveyed to the Consultants appointed for this project.

Farmers' Market

The Deputation advised that this group was a sub group of the Community Council. They advised that the preferred site was the existing Market Square and they were in discussions with the Council with regard to finding the most suitable location. They referred to a small plot of land which they had been advised had been purchased by the Council for the provision of a public toilet. They stated that public toilets were being provided in the proposed Shopping Centre and asked if this land would be made available to the Farmers' Market. Mr. Cullen stated that it would be checked out whether it was viable or not.

Mr. Costello advised that the small plot of land referred to was adjacent to the Market Square and had been earmarked for the provision of a public toilet. It was agreed to check out the ownership of the small plot of land before the next meeting. It is the opinion of the Engineers on safety, ease of use and access grounds that the Quay is the only appropriate location for the proposed Farmer's Market.

Inner Relief Road

The Deputation queried as to whether the indicative local access road indicated in the Local Area Plan remained as an objective or if it had been replaced by the roadway recently approved.

Mr. Cullen stated that the position was that the objective indicated in the Local Area Plan remains in place and its purpose as an indicative circulation layout to facilitate expansion

of village centre objectives, is outlined in Section 5, Paragraph 5.4 of the Local Area Plan. It was noted that the Relief Road as adopted recently by the Part 8 was a separate project.

Traffic Management Plan

The Deputation asked for a time-frame as to when a Traffic Management Plan would be prepared for Kinvara town.

Mr. Lavelle advised that Kinvara was among a number of villages where traffic management plans were needed. Unfortunately due to the number of towns and villages awaiting Traffic Management Plans, he said that it was not possible to give a precise timeframe for the completion of the Kinvara Plan at this stage.

The Deputation queried how they could become more involved in consultations on proposed works for their area. Cllr. Willers stated that most of the decisions/proposed works were put on public display and there was a time-frame for which submissions could be made. They requested that they be included in consultations before the final decisions were made. They said that they felt it was important for those living in their area to have an input into how their village develops and to be involved at an earlier stage.

Cllr. Willers thanked the Deputation for coming and advised that an update on the issues raised would be issued to them in due course.

The Deputation then left the meeting.

It was agreed that the Deputation would be written to update them on the issues they had raised and this would also be forwarded to the Councillors.

Cllr. Feeney resumed as Chair of the Meeting.

ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON TO LOUGHREA ELECTORAL COMMITTEE

Cllr. Feeney stated that on being elected Mayor of the County he had taken the decision to stand down from Chair the Loughrea Area Committee. He thanked all the people that made this Committee work and he thanked the Staff, Officials and his colleagues for their co-operation during his term as Chair of the Committee. He invited nominees for Chairperson of the Loughrea Electoral Area Committee.

On the proposal of Cllr. W. Burke, seconded by Cllr. Hynes, Cllr. Willers was proposed for Chairperson of Loughrea Electoral Area Committee. As there were no other nominations Cllr. Willers was elected Chairperson of Loughrea Electoral Area Committee. Cllr. Willers then took the Chair.

Cllr. Willers congratulated Cllr. Feeney on being elected Mayor of the County and wished him well in his year as Mayor. The Members also wished to be associated with these sentiments.

MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12TH JUNE 2008

On the proposal of Cllr. W. Burke, seconded by Cllr. Maher, the Minutes of the Local Area Committee Meeting held on 12th June 2008 were confirmed.

Matters Arising

Capira Water Sampling

Cllr. W. Burke asked for an update regarding representations he made at a recent meeting regarding the possible contamination of domestic drinking water in a dwelling-house near Capira Dump. Mr. Cullen advised that contact had been made with the family in question and that a Technician from the Environment & Water Services Section would be calling to the family this week to investigate the situation.

Car-Park – Portumna

Cllr. Burke asked that consideration be given to advancing the car-park in Portumna as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Dolly stated that this matter would be considered in the overall context of the Traffic Management Plan for Portumna and they would not be making any approaches at this point in time. Cllr. Burke stated that as there was no time-frame for the implementation of the Traffic Management Plan that the provision of this car-park is moved on separately. Mr. Dolly stated that it would have to be considered in the overall context of the Traffic Management Plan and could not be advanced separately.

Canon Quin Park, Gort

Cllr. Fahy asked what the up-to-date position was in relation to the acquisition of Canon Quin Park in Gort for the purpose of provision of a car-park. Mr. Lavelle stated that the Church had withdrawn the offer as they had received representations that the community were not in favour of it being converted to a car-park. Members were of the opinion that the public were in favour of this as a car-park and it was only the minority that were against it.

Pay & Display Athenry

Cllr. Feeney asked for the up-date in relation to the implementation of Pay & Display Parking in Athenry. Mr. Lavelle stated that the Part 8 for Backlawn Car-Park would be included on the next Council Meeting for consideration. He stated that the Pay & Display parking should be ready to commence within a couple of weeks. Cllr. Feeney stated that he would be opposed to the implementation of Pay & Display Parking in Athenry Town until such time as there was a long-term car-park in place. He stated that it would be unfair to introduce such a system without having long-term parking provided. It was agreed that the Mayor would speak to the Director of Roads & Transportation Unit to resolve the position.

Seven Eyed Bridge Kilchreest

Cllr. Willers stated that no repairs have been carried out to-date to the Seven Eyed Bridge at Kilchreest. Mr. Dolly stated that the parapet walls had to be made safe and they would require funding to repair it. In the interim he would ask the Executive Engineer to make it safe and sign-post it urgently. Mr. Sheil stated that they would block off the breach in the wall. He stated that the preferred interim solution in the absence of the new bridge was the provision of traffic lights.

Meadow Court Cross

Cllr. Maher queried where the €150,000 funding that had been originally allocated for works to Meadow Court Cross Junction had been spent. Mr. Dolly stated that grant monies had been approved for this location but owing to land acquisition difficulties at the time the job was not done and the money was transferred to another job that was ready to commence. Mr. Lavelle explained the process to the Members and stated there was a very limited timeframe from when the monies are allocated to getting the job done. He explained that if there were long delays, i.e. land acquisition, then the grant would be withdrawn from that job and transferred to somewhere where works can commence without delay.

Works at Ballynagar, Loughrea

Cllr. Hynes asked for an update on the proposed works at Ballynagar, Loughrea. Mr. Dolly advised that C.P.O. documentation was being served in the coming week. He estimated the time-scale would be six months if there were no challenges to the scheme. However he advised if there was a Hearing it would be difficult to put a time-scale on it. He stated that if there were no objections to the C.P.O. they may be in a position to spend the 2008 allocation, otherwise they may have to reallocate the monies to another project and he would be coming back to the Members for their approval to same.

Oxgrove Bridge

Mr. Dolly stated that they were proceeding with the works that were approved for Oxgrove Bridge. These works included replacing parapets, improved signage, road

markings, lining and resurfacing. He said that he had received numerous requests to have the bridge widened and the road realigned. He explained that that was a huge job but they were looking at the possibility of widening the bridge. He stated that he had been advised that the landowners would make the lands available. However he had requested clarification that lands would be provided free of charge and stated that he would be making a case for funding to have these works done in 2009.

Traffic Lights – Westbridge

In reply to Cllr. Willer's query on the provision of traffic lights at Westbridge, Mr. Lavelle advised that these lights would be completed by the end of year.

Damaged Light on Ennis Road, Gort

Cllr. Regan stated that the damaged light outside Eamon Melvin's house had not been repaired to-date. Mr. Sheil stated that the E.S.B. had been notified again about it.

Cllr. Fahy stated that the traffic lights in Gort were causing huge tail-backs, particularly on Friday afternoons. He recommended that a Guard be on duty particularly on the busier days. He was advised that the new N18 would alleviate some of the traffic coming through Gort Town.

Update on N18

Cllr. Hynes asked that an update on the N18 be available for the next meeting and it was agreed that the National Roads Design Office would be requested to provide an update for the next Meeting.

Utility Poles

Mr. Lavelle referred to a Meeting he attended recently with the Road Safety Authority (R.S.A.) where the issue of "Stranded Poles", i.e. telephone/ESB poles left out on roadway when landowner pulls back the ditch, was discussed. He said that the outcome of these discussions was that where such cases arise that the utility provider who owns the pole be informed of the safety issue with the pole. He said that such poles constitute a hazard and this puts an onus on Eircom or the ESB. He said that if they didn't move them there is a record there of it being notified as a hazard. Mr. Dolly stated that he had suggested that a single letter should go to the service providers notifying them of the danger of these poles. He said that they wouldn't have the resources available to do a survey of these poles in each Engineering Area.

Main Street Loughrea

Referring to the works on Main Street, Cllr. Regan stated that the edging in to the walls of the buildings on Main Street from the footpath was finished in a very poor state. Mr. Lavelle stated that he would have the matter checked out.

REVIEW OF COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Ms. McConnell circulated to the Members a copy of the Presentation that was made to the Members at the Workshop held in Claregalway on 2nd July 2008. She stated that the objective of that presentation was to increase the understanding of the environmental framework within which the County Development Plan would be prepared; the impact of environmental legislation on how we prepare development plans; and how this has changed significantly in recent months on foot of an EU court case against Ireland. She stated that what she would like to dwell on the County Spatial Strategy; Settlement Strategy, Rural Enterprise Policy and future growth in the County.

She stated that the County Spatial Strategy was the overall development framework and vision for the County and the surrounding region. She said the idea is the identification of strategic locations for growth and development (spreading development equally may not be possible) as they had to show maximum return for investment that was going on under the Capital Investment Programme. She said that they had to come up with a Spatial Strategy that combines best use of land in key towns and locations. She stated that the Settlement Strategy was a key element in the County Spatial Strategy. She stated that it was necessary to recognise the strong inter-linkages between things such as transportation and land-use, how to make the most out of the investment in the N17, N18 and the M6, the importance of the old N6, N17 and N18 as economic/transportation corridors, how land-use determines water and waste water needs and how all of these are contained within the overall policies incorporated into the Development Plan. She stated that the Settlement Strategy had proved extremely successful and they had made some minor changes to it. The issue of availability of services within the Settlement Centres was something that would have to be addressed. She stated that the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) meant that their approach and the recording of all decision making relating to the County Development Plan now had to be far more meticulous and disciplined. She stated that changes in the Development Plan would have to be assessed for their impact on the environment and these impacts and mitigation measures included in the Environmental Report prepared as part of the SEA. She stated that an essential element for the development of the rural areas of the county was rural enterprise policy. She said that this policy must be flexible enough to facilitate small businesses that are rural based or tourist related and they had to be mindful of how they could accommodate those types of enterprises and what sort of policies do they need and to tailor the policies that particularly reflect their needs. She stated that it would be very useful to get a consensus from the Members on this when it was being discussed at the Council Meeting on 21st July 2008. She said that it was also desirable to understand how the County City Interface is critical to the welfare of the City and the welfare of the County. She said that they needed to work with the city in the identification of this as a priority area for specific policy action as it was critical for the future of both. She said that it was important that they fully supported the Strategic Corridor from Oranmore to Athenry to Attymon and work in close co-operation with the IDA to ensure that the attractiveness of this region is retained and enhanced and to facilitate them in attracting industry to the area. She stated that one of the major issues facing them was transportation and they needed to focus on

the identification of Transportation Hubs. She stated that they had identified Garraun, beside Oranmore, as a suitable hub on which one can build transportation facilities attached to rail and bus corridors and likewise Tuam when the Western Rail Corridor reopens.

Cllr. W. Burke complimented the Planning Section in organising such an informative presentation. In relation to the Manager's Report that was circulated to the Members at the meeting held in Tuam, he said that normally in the past when they sent in submissions there was a direct reply to that submission but on this occasion it was included with a number of other submissions. He suggested that each submission be replied to separately. He also requested that the Relief Road in Portumna be included in the Plan as an objective. In relation to Rural Enterprise, he complimented the Council in changing with the times and that Galway was unique in how it was developing. He referred to the Lough Derg Rejuvenation Project and queried if there was any report produced on that. He said that that it was very important that the development of Lough Derg and particularly the area that covers Woodford, Portumna, was included as an objective in the Plan. In relation to Ardaun, Cllr. W. Burke stated that there was not a lot of information about Ardaun and queried if they had to make a decision on this issue as part of the consideration of the Development Plan. Ms. McConnell advised that the Draft Plan goes on public display from 15th August and submissions are invited at that stage. She advised that the Members can make submissions and each of these submissions will be responded to individually. She advised that if they could sort out a lot of the issues now, it would lessen the work-load for finalising the Plan. In relation to the query about the Relief Road for Portumna, Ms. McConnell advised that that should be included as an objective in the Plan. She also advised that Lough Derg was included under Objective HL 45; ED 15 and ED 31.

Cllr. Fahy gave an example of where a farmer who looked for planning permission for a site which he proposed to sell on so that the proceeds would help towards reducing the mortgages for his daughters who were living in Dublin but was refused because the site in question was within the town boundary. He asked could anything be done for these exceptional circumstances. Ms. McConnell advised that it would be very difficult to include provision in the Plan for one-off cases such as that given by Cllr. Fahy. She advised that they didn't propose to make any change to the Rural Housing Policy.

Cllr. Regan queried whether the Council were going to diversify into a situation where major growth could continue around Galway City and little or no growth happening in the remainder of the County. He referred particularly to the east of the County and to towns such as Loughrea, Portumna and Killimor. He suggested that two Development Plans were required, one to cover close to the city and one outside of that. He said that if they were to move on developing Galway as a whole there cannot be a total imbalance as there is presently. He gave an example of a business man he knew who was looking for a suitable site that could provide 200 jobs in Loughrea through the provision of a distribution centre but has been unable to do so. Ms. McConnell stated that she felt that the Rural Enterprise Policy would be very positively disposed towards starting such rural businesses. She stated that they would certainly be trying to be as flexible as they could towards it.

Referring to the Local Area Plan for Loughrea, Cllr. Hynes queried if there would be any relaxation on planning permission for lands north of the Bye Pass. He stated that it was very difficult to acquire commercial industrial lands and if planning permission could be granted for these lands it would help job creating type industries. Ms. McConnell stated that everything was up for renegotiation and if there was no longer a national route there, this would certainly be taken in consideration. She stated that the Local Area Plan would be reviewed again in 2012 and advised that the development landscape changes every number of years and it would have to be re-looked at that time. Cllr. Hynes queried if it was possible that when the existing route is downgraded, that there might be a different thinking in relation to planning applications for that area. Mr. Sheil advised that his understanding was that the Bye Pass won't change as a national route. He stated that the former N6 would become a Regional Road.

Cllr. G. Burke queried if the County Development Plan superseded the Local Area Plan. Ms. McConnell advised that the County Development Plan is the Parent/Statutory Document.

Cllr. Regan stated that the development of Ardaun would be detrimental to the rest of the county; he referred particularly to towns the far side of Loughrea where no expansion or development was taking place. Ms. McConnell advised that it needed to be looked at in an overall context. She stated that the presentation circulated to the Members gave the advantages and disadvantages to the proposed development of Ardaun. She stated that it had to be viewed as a long-term strategy. She gave the example of Adamstown in Dublin which has been developed over a long period of time and advised that there is at least another ten years development to take place there. She stated that they proposed to organise a day-trip for the Councillors to see this development on the ground. Cllr. Regan stated that you couldn't compare Adamstown to Ardaun. Ms. McConnell stated that you cannot compare the scale but you could compare the approach and the principles. Mr. Cullen advised that they would be putting the case for and against the development of Ardaun. Cllr. Willers queried who was pushing this concept? Mr. Cullen explained that it was a concept that emerged from the Galway Planning & Transportation Study (GPTS) and it first came to prominence ten years ago. He said that it was being driven more by the City than the County. Cllr. Regan referred to the Carnmore Airport Road and to the massive funding it had received over the last number of years. He said that this had no benefit to the east of the county and he feared that the same would happen again if Ardaun was developed. Mr. Cullen agreed that the biggest fear was that it may take up most of the available resources. However, he said if it didn't have a negative impact on other towns in east Galway then there shouldn't be a problem with it. Ms. McConnell stated that the City and County agreed the G.P.T.S. and Ardaun was part of that. She said that they were now at a stage when they had to make a decision on whether to progress it or not and this decision would have to be taken when the Development Plan was being considered. Mr. Cullen advised that they had to be careful in making this decision. He said that by not going ahead with Ardaun they could still be faced with the same problems, it could still take up all of the resources and they would be on the outside looking in. He said that they needed to think East Galway Main Drainage and other towns could be damaged as a result of turning down Ardaun. He said that it was important to

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look at all of the options in front of them. He said that it wasn't an easy decision and there was a lot to be considered in it. Cllr. W. Burke felt they were still short on specifics on this proposal. He said that they needed to make a decision for the greater good of the county overall. He said that there had to be something in there for them. He said that they had to look at being competitive in this new economic climate. Ms. McConnell stated that this was very much part of the Department thinking. She said that the City and County needed to work together and the Gateway concept should be used to increase the attractiveness of County and City for foreign direct investment. She stated that from the Council's point of view, Garraun made a lot of sense. She agreed that it would be a difficult decision for the Members to make and they should be careful in their consideration of this important issue. Cllr. Regan stated that that it would be easier to sell this concept if there was something in it for the smaller towns such as Portumna, Loughrea and they should look towards this. He also proposed a name-change for Ardaun. Ms. McConnell stated that all they could do was to make circumstances right for investment in these towns. She stated that they had in the Settlement Strategy.

Ms. McConnell stated that if Councillors have specific issues they wanted to raise they should submit them before the Council Meeting on 21st July. She explained that the practice of making last minute changes to the Plan would have to cease, as they would now have to take into account the impact of each and every change on the environment and how that they have done that or else the Plan may be open to challenge. She also advised that the Draft Plan would be going on public display on 15th August 2008.

Chríochnaigh an Cruinniú ansin