

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

**MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT LOUGHREA REGIONAL OFFICES ON
THURSDAY, 13th MAY 2010**

LLATHAIR

Baill:

Cllr. M. Maher, Chairperson
Cllr. J. McClearn
Cllr. P. Feeney
Cllr. M. Fahy
Cllr. P. Hynes
Cllr. B. Willers
Cllr. G. Finnerty

Oifigigh:

Mr. J. Cullen, D.O.S., Environment & Water Services Unit
Mr. M. Lavelle, S.E., Roads & Transportation Unit
Mr. U. Finn, S.E.E., Ballinasloe & Loughrea Electoral Areas
Ms. A. Power, S.S.O., Loughrea Regional Offices

DEPUTATION FROM THE GABLES RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

The Chairperson welcomed Messrs. J.J. Madden and B. Farrell to the Meeting. The Deputation outlined a number of outstanding issues in the Estate as follows:

- The front boundary wall around the green to be capped and plastered
- The wall around the ESB transformer to be risen 2 blocks on the edge as this wall is not the same height as the boundary wall.
- The ESB transformer box to be covered as the children in the estate are playing on top of transformer
- Footpaths in need of repair
- Kerbs in need of repair
- Gully needs to be installed on road outside No. 12 as it is liable to flooding
- The road outside Nos. 1 – 11 need a final coat of tar.
- The streetlights outside Nos. 16 – 18 need to be switched on, as there are no streetlights in that area of the estate.
- No landscaping has been done yet which was a condition of planning permission on the final phase of the estate.
- The estate has no name signage to indicate “THE GABLES”.

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The Deputation also circulated copy of snag list for each house and asked that these issues would be addressed by the Council. They also highlighted the fact that the title of the properties had not been transferred from the Council to them since their purchase in 2004/2005. They asked for the status on this and that they be given a timeframe on when this would be sorted. They also queried whether a bond was paid by the Developer to the County Council and if the Council still had it.

Cllr. McClearn stated that the items raised by the Deputation ranged from minor to serious items. He said he hoped that the Council would chart a programme of work that would get the problems resolved and requested the Council to make a start as soon as possible. Referring to the planning permission for lowering wall on Cedar Avenue which was refused, Mr. Lavelle explained that anyone has the right to object to any planning permission under planning law. He said the adjudication on the permission was an independent function and cannot be influenced by the Members or any section of the Council. He said that the Council had no function in relation to this.

The Deputation then left the Meeting.

Mr. Sheil explained to the Meeting that this was a Low Cost Housing Development that was constructed in 2002/03 and the Council purchased the estate from the Developer. He stated that there were non-compliance issues to be addressed and the Council were awaiting a response from the Contractor's Engineer. In relation to the Snag list, he advised that he would pass it on to the Housing Maintenance Section. In relation to the Properties Folio's and contract documents for the houses, he stated that the matter was with the Council's Legal Department who were working on it and were trying to process the matter further. He advised that the bond lodged by the Developer was still there but was quite small. He said that they had approached the Contractor's Engineer and asked him to request the builder to try to get the outstanding works finished. He said that they felt that this was the most appropriate way to address the matter.

Cllr. McClearn stated that he wanted to go back to these residents with a commitment that some progress would be made on some of the issues raised. In relation to the issue of ESB sub-station, Cllr. McClearn suggested that a wire mesh be put around it to make it safe.

Mr. Sheil stated that he would address the outstanding issues with the Engineer that signed off on the Certificate of Compliance and apply pressure to get those works done. He said that he would seek a reply back from the Council's Legal Department to finalise dealing with the Certificates of Compliance, transfer of housing contracts to tenants and completion of estate either by Contractor/Consultant Engineer. He advised that he was unable to give a timeframe on when this would be completed. Cllr. McClearn stated that the Contractor should be asked to put a timeframe as to when these works would be complete.

DEPUTATION FROM PORTUMNA PRIMARY PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Chairperson welcomed Messrs. U. Hynes, N. Kelly, D. Long, Ms. M. Kilkenny and Garda Quinn to the Meeting. Mr. Hynes explained that they were addressing the Meeting as a delegation representing the parents, management and staff of Scoil Bhreandáin Naofa Primary School, Portumna and Portumna Community School. They explained that they had previously made a presentation to the Area Meeting in May 2009 highlighting their concerns regarding the safety of pupils entering and exiting the schools at school opening and closing times and that no action had been taken by Galway County Council since then. They stated that the traffic congestion on St. Brigid's Avenue, Portumna was causing this serious problem. At school opening and closing times the road has to cater for 801 pupils being dropped off and collected from these schools, causing major congestion. They stated that the lack of provision in planning of a proper traffic management system to cater for the confluence of traffic in the area has brought about this very serious problem. The Deputation proposed the following measures would greatly improve the very dangerous situation which currently exists:

- Ban on H.G.V.'s and other Heavy Vehicles from St. Brigid's Avenue
- Provision of crossing facilities
- Installation of Traffic Calming Measures

They stated that while they appreciated that government funding was now seriously restricted, they asked that serious consideration be given to their proposals and to make this a priority in the allocation of any available funding.

Cllr. McClearn stated that the points raised and the solutions put forward would be discussed and if they could operate around these they would try and move forward on them. He said that he was conscious of the fact that a solution was needed now and they would try and find a solution within the confines of the budget they had.

Mr. Lavelle explained that there were over 230 schools throughout the county, many of which would have had similar problems as was highlighted by the Deputation. He explained that a commitment had been given to prepare and implement a Traffic Management Plan for Portumna but as the Council's revenue was down over 20% from last year and with staff numbers being significantly reduced, the staffing was not there to prepare the plan and the funding was not there to implement the plan in the short-term. He stated that he visited Portumna subsequent to the Deputation being received in 2009 and met with Fr. Lawless and they looked at different sites/options that would help alleviate the traffic congestion at this location. However, he explained that nothing had progressed on any of these options since. In relation to the proposal to ban H.G.V.'s, Mr. Lavelle stated that it would be very difficult to impose a total ban on this road. He also stated that he would not be in favour of a one-way system as it would be there were a few housing estates along this road and they would be inconvenienced if this was imposed. In relation to the traffic calming proposals, he stated these could be included in this proposed Traffic Management Plan.

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Mr. Hynes stated that they were disappointed with the initial response. In relation to the Traffic Management Plan for Portumna, he stated that they realised that this was a medium to long-term solution and what they were asking for was something that could be easily done and at a minimum cost.

The Deputation then left the Meeting.

Cllr. McClearn stated that he was not happy with Mr. Lavelle's response to the Deputation nor with the way he spoke to them. He said that when receiving deputations, the arrangement was that Officials did not comment until after the Deputation left and this was not done in this instance. He said there was a serious risk of somebody being injured at those schools if something was not done to address this serious situation. In relation to the solutions put forward by the Deputation, Cllr. McClearn stated that they were not hugely costly and the Council should be able to work with the schools involved to come to a resolution on it.

Mr. Lavelle stated that in September 2009, he met with the Principal of the N.S. and Fr. Lawless and they visited a few sites on St. Brigid's Road. He stated that the N.S. has a large area at the front of the school and the suggestion was made that a submission could be made to the Department of Education for funding for the provision of pick-up/drop-off facilities which could help alleviate the traffic congestion in the area. He stated that the Community School own a large area of land at the back of the school and he suggested that some of this area could be converted to a car-park. However, he had received no further communication in relation to these proposals. Regarding the suggestion for the installation of rumble strips, he explained that they cannot be installed within 100m of a dwelling-house and would not be suitable to this area.

After discussion it was agreed that the Mr. Finn would look into what was entailed in the possibility of banning HGV's from this road. It was further agreed that the Council would make a submission to the Department for funding for a crossing under the Low Cost Accident Measure Scheme. It was agreed that if the school were to agree to provide pick-up/drop-off facilities on this street that this would be done in conjunction with the proposed crossing to ensure that it was correctly positioned. Mr. Cullen suggested that a reply would go from the Roads & Transportation Unit to the Deputation stating that the Council would erect signs banning H.G.V.'s from that road and that the Council were in favour of the proposal for a pedestrian crossing and it could be done in conjunction with Board of Management/School's agreeing to the provision of a pick-up/drop-off facility. Mr. Finn suggested that a lot of traffic use this road as a short-cut into the town. He suggested that if a series of ramps were installed along this road it would deter traffic from doing this. In response to Cllr. Maher, Mr. Finn estimated that the ramps would cost €3,500.00 each.

DEPUTATION FROM WOODFORD ANGLERS

The Chairperson welcomed Messrs. T. Tully and P. Reilly to the Meeting. They explained that they had requested to address the Members in relation to the Woodford Sewerage Scheme. They explained that this scheme was built in 1960 and the effluent from the system was flowing into the river untreated. It was stated that there had been some fish-kills in recent times and they had notified the Council of same. He said they had been made aware that the upgrading of the Woodford Sewerage System was included in the Council's Assessment of Needs but felt that it would take years before this happened. They explained that they were trying to promote tourism in this area and suggested that the installation of a small treatment plant could be an effective solution.

Cllr. McClearn stated the problem in this river was being exasperated by climate change and population increase in recent years. He stated that the Deputation were trying to promote fishing and tourism for their area and were concerned about the negative effect the discharge was having on this. Mr. Finn stated that data provided in the Western River Basin Management Plan stated that the water quality in this river was classified as being quite good. He stated that the Council carry out ongoing monitoring throughout the year and said that while the readings from the outlet didn't comply with current standards, the upstream tests confirmed that it was having no detrimental effect on the quality of the stream. He said that the tests haven't shown any potential problems.

The Deputation then left the Meeting.

Mr. Cullen stated that the upstream/down-stream water quality measurement was having no serious impact on the stream and the water quality status was classified as being good. He explained that from 2009 the Council had to apply to the EPA for certification for all waste water treatment plants and the Council would be forced to update the plant when this was implemented. In relation to the request to provide a small treatment plant, he explained that the Council did not have funding to provide same.

Mr. Cullen informed the Meeting that the Contract for Advance Works for Gort would be signed next week.

MINUTES OF LOUGHREA AREA MEETING HELD ON 22nd APRIL 2010

On the proposal of Cllr. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. Finnerty, the Minutes of the Loughrea Area Meeting held on 22nd April 2010 were confirmed.

Matters Arising from Minutes of 22nd April 2010

2010 Works Programme To-date

Mr. Lavelle outlined to the Members an update on the Roadworks Programme for each Engineering area in the Loughrea Electoral area.

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Cllr. McClearn queried if there was enough operatives in each engineering area to complete the roadworks programme and if not was the Council precluded from employing temporary staff. Mr. Lavelle stated that the roadworks programme would be completed from the existing staff they had. He confirmed that they had enough staff to deliver on the work they had at present and certain sections of the works would go out to contract, i.e. DBM. In reply to Cllr. Finnerty regarding use of the Patcher, Mr. Finn explained that there were three fully operational patchers for the county but there were a limited number of drivers. He explained that they were quite expensive to run and its use was weather dependant.

Road near Cregclare Crossroads, Ardrahan

Cllr. Fahy asked if there was any update regarding carrying out improvements on this road and stated that the matter was of grave concern to the residents in the area. Mr. Lavelle stated that Mr. Costello had made contact with the landowners involved but he was finding it difficult to get agreement on what accommodation works were to be carried out. In reply to Cllr. Fahy, Mr. Lavelle explained that they had to negotiate with the adjoining landowners regarding the proposed accommodation works and would look towards reaching a compromise that would suit all.

Map of Electoral Area

Cllr. Finnerty thanked Mr. Lavelle for the O.S. map of Gort Engineering area and asked if maps of both the Loughrea and Portumna Engineering areas could be made available also. Mr. Lavelle stated that he would organise this.

Criteria for Parking Permit

Cllr. Feeney queried if there was any update in relation to the query raised at the last Area Meeting regarding the criteria for parking permits, in particular small goods vehicles. Mr. Cullen stated that he had made a recommendation to the Roads Department on it and was waiting their reply.

Public Toilets at Swimming Area at Traught, Kinvara

Cllr. Finnerty queried if there was any update on this since the last meeting. Mr. Cullen advised that an arrangement would be in place for the June Bank Holiday week-end and that a recommendation had been made by Mr. Costello which was currently being considered. He further advised that a Blue Flag Programme Checklist was being circulated to the relevant Area Offices to ensure compliance with upcoming An Taisce inspections.

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Sewerage Pipe on Bride Street/Culvert in Castlenancy/ Flooding at Grangemore, Tynagh/ Direction Signs for Kilchreest at Westbridge

Cllr. Willers asked for an update on these issues which were raised at the last meeting. Mr. Finn stated that a reply would be issued to her from the Area Office.

Kilrickle W.S.

Cllr. Hynes stated that the Members had been invited to a Meeting regarding Kilrickle water supply and he queried the possibility of them getting a public water supply in the immediate future. Mr. Cullen stated that a delegation from Kilrickle was meeting with officials from the Council in advance on Monday's Meeting. He stated that a report was being prepared and would be circulated to the Elected Members which gives a detailed briefing on the situation. He said this was being forwarded to the Department requesting they reassess the situation regarding the upgrading of Loughrea Regional Water Supply Scheme and emphasised the need to supply Kilrickle.

Backlawn Car-Park/Ring Road, Athenry

Cllr. Feeney queried when works would be commencing on both Backlawn Car-Park and the Ring Road in Athenry. Mr. Lavelle stated that staffing from Oranmore Electoral Area would be doing the preparatory works on these schemes and the surfacing would be going out to contract.

TIDY TOWNS/VILLAGES

Mr. Lavelle stated that he had asked that this item be discussed at the Area Meeting. He said that they had to try and combat the litter problem going on countywide and that dealing with litter was a huge burden on scarce resources. He suggested that a portion of Councillors Notice of Motion Monies be allocated to focus on a particular town/village which may help to win the Tidy Towns Competition which in turn would encourage other towns/villages to follow suit. Cllr. Maher suggested that Councillors could nominate 1/2 Tidy Towns Projects for funding in their Electoral Area and that a cap be put on the allocation. Cllr. Willers stated that she was in favour of members making a contribution towards a particular tidy towns/village group as suggested by Mr. Lavelle. Cllr. McClearn suggested that the Council needed to put some resources into targeting people who are illegally dumping. He also suggested that a local committee be established who would organise a litter-watch and would liaise with the local Community Warden and proposed that the Council establish it as a pilot project. Cllr. Feeney stated that he didn't think that concentrating notice of motion monies on one area in bad times was a good idea. He said the more important thing to do was to create a partnership approach as the benefit would be better.

Mr. Cullen stated that dumping was more of a problem than littering. The dumping of black bags was an epidemic problem throughout the county and was a huge cost on the

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Council's resources. He stated that education and awareness was only part of the solution and that more successful prosecutions were required to get the message out there. He said that what they were trying to do was roll out the installation of CCTV cameras in problem areas. He said they were also developing bye-laws at the moment to enable notices to be served on people to show how they deal with their rubbish. Mr. Finn suggested that if an allocation of the Councillors' Notice of Motion funding was going to be put into certain tidy towns, that it be used for replacing bins, signs, and grass cutting, etc.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Car-Park Kinvara

Cllr. Finnerty asked if there was any chance of moving on the proposed car-park for Kinvara. Mr. Lavelle stated that they were looking for a suitable site but the availability of resources was a major issue.

Bullaun School

Cllr. Finnerty stated that there is a flood running across the road due to a pipe being blocked and requested funding to address this issue. Mr. Lavelle advised that was an issue for the O.P.W.

N66 – Bad Potholes

Cllr. Finnerty asked that the bad potholes on the N66 be attended to. Cllr. Willers queried when these would be done and referred particularly to the stretch from Loughrea to Castledaly junction. Mr. Lavelle stated that the Road Design Section was currently preparing contract documents for the Lakeshore Contract (N66) and they hoped to have it out to tender in the coming weeks.

Bridge at Ballyshrul

Cllr. Finnerty referred to improvements being carried out to the road both sides of Ballyshrul Bridge and queried if any improvements were proposed for the bridge. The Meeting were advised that under the Regional Road Bridge Maintenance funding, repairs would be carried out to the bridge walls but no widening would be taking place.

Hedgecutting

Cllr. Finnerty said that while he accepted that there was limited funding for hedge-cutting, he asked could some initiative be put together in the form of a co-operative to give something towards hedge-cutting on minor roads. Cllr. Willers stated that they were not getting value for money in relation to the amount of hedge-cutting being carried out and queried if there was any option of pooling money into getting larger areas done. It was suggested that the Council should bargain with private contractors with regard to the

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amount of hedge-cutting they carry out and whatever money was made available it was important to get the best value for money in terms of the amount of work carried out.

In response to Cllr. Fahy, Mr. Lavelle stated under Health & Safety Regulations, contractors were obliged to have a flagman on both sides of the road controlling traffic and that they had to comply with safety standards.

Flooding – OPW Funding

Cllr. McClearn referred to the recent announcement of funding for a number of small schemes and asked what the expected timeframe was for these works to be carried out. Mr. Lavelle advised that they were progressing well on some of the schemes. However, he explained that there was some that they had to liaise with the O.P.W. and Parks & Wildlife Department in advance of the works commencing.

N65 – Portumna

Cllr. McClearn referred to the N65, Main Street Portumna and requested that funding be provided for both road resurfacing and reinstatement of footpaths. Mr. Lavelle advised that they would continue to put pressure on the N.R.A. to provide this funding.

Athenry Town

Cllr. Feeney requested that some of the street markings in Athenry town be replaced as many of them were worn away. He also requested that yellow lines are put in the vicinity of the train station to prevent people parking illegally and dangerously. Mr. Lavelle stated that this could be addressed by extending the Traffic Management Plan out further in the town. Cllr. Feeney stated that this would take too long and queried if yellow lines could be put in place immediately to deter people from parking illegally. Mr. Finn advised under the more recent legislation under the Roads Act, Local Authorities no longer needed to pass bye-laws to restrict parking on the public road. They should however keep a schedule up-to-date for presentation at court if requested.

Blocked Gully

Cllr. Feeney stated that gullies were blocked at Alfie Deehan's house at Newford, Raheen.

Ennis Bridge

Cllr. Feeney referred to a boundary wall at Madden's field near the Ennis Bridge which was knocked down over two years ago and it was agreed that it would be rebuilt when the Ennis Bridge was completed. He said that he wasn't sure if the responsibility rested with Iarnrod Eireann, N6 Construction or Galway County Council.

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Mahony's Turn, Ardrahan

Cllr. Fahy referred to an accident at Mahony's turn in Ardrahan in which the wall the knocked and requested that it be rebuilt again. He also requested that the road be resurfaced at this location.

Work-to-Rule by Council Staff

Cllr. Fahy asked for the up-to-date position in relation to the Work-to-Rule being implemented by Council Staff. Mr. Cullen advised that the Unions were currently in discussions regarding the Croake Park Agreement and members would be balloting on it shortly. However, he said that the matter would have to be addressed if the ballot was not passed.

Potholes

Cllr. Hynes referred to a number of potholes at Kilchreest; Ballacurra, Sonnagh, Kylegarriff, Cahertrim, Glanaclara (outside Gordon Mahon's house) and Ballyeigher (near Aille Church) and asked that they be attended to. These locations were noted.

Public Lights - Fearan Riach Housing Estate

Cllr. Hynes stated that public light outside No. 1 Fearan Riach was not working and asked that contact be made with the ESB. Mr. Sheil took note of this.

Chrochnaigh an Cruinniú ansin