

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Galway County Council

Ceantar Bardasach Bhaile Átha an Rí

Municipal District of Athenry

Minutes of the Meeting of the Municipal District of Athenry held in the Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, on Wednesday 10th July, 2019.

I LATHAIR:

BAILL: Cllr. J. Cuddy (Cathaoirleach)
Cllr. G. Cronnelly,
Cllr. J. Charity,
Cllr. L. Carroll,
Cllr. D. Collins,
Cllr. S. Herterich Quinn,
Cllr. A. Dolan.

OIFIGIGH: Mr. M. Owens, A/Director of Services,
Mr. D. Pender, Senior Engineer,
Ms. P. Higgins, Senior Executive Engineer,
Mr. P. Gavin, Executive Engineer,
Ms. G. Healy, A/Administrative Officer,
Ms. G. Cooley, Assistant Staff Officer

Cllr. Cuddy, Cathaoirleach of Athenry Municipal District Council, welcomed all present at the Meeting.

To confirm Minutes of the Athenry Oranmore Municipal District Meeting held on 13th May, 2019

AMD 05

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cronnelly and **SECONDED** by Cllr. Carroll, the Minutes of the Athenry Oranmore Municipal District Meeting held on 13th May 2019, were **AGREED**.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

Cllr. Charity referred to Page 8 of the Minutes and said that he had been informed by the Acting County Secretary that his Motion in relation to the County Playground Policy would be brought before the Council at a forthcoming Meeting of the Plenary Council.

To confirm the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Athenry Municipal District Council held on 11th June, 2019. **AMD 06**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Charity and **SECONDED** by Cllr. Collins, the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Athenry Municipal District Council held on 11th June 2019, were **AGREED**.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

Mr. Owens referred to the Schedule of Meetings for the Municipal District which had been agreed at the AGM. He said that he had a prior commitment to attend Meetings of the CCMA Housing & Building Committee in Dublin which would coincide with the dates agreed by the Members.

Following a discussion by the Members, Cllr. Charity **PROPOSED** that the bi-monthly Meetings of the Municipal District of Athenry be held on the second Tuesday, as follows:

Tuesday, 9th July 2019, at 10.00 am

Tuesday, 10th September, 2019 at 10.00 am

Tuesday, 12th November, 2019 at 10.00 am

Tuesday, 14th January, 2020 at 10.00 am

Tuesday, 10th March, 2020 at 10.00 am

Tuesday, 12th May, 2020 at 10.00 am.

This proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr. Cuddy, and **AGREED**.

Notice of Motion: Cllr. S. Herterich Quinn:

AMD 07

Cllr. Herterich Quinn submitted the following Notice of Motion:

"I, Cllr. Shelly Herterich Quinn propose that "Galway County Council would trial free parking in the Backlawn Carpark in Athenry from September to November in order to encourage use of this currently 'under used' facility. Business owners, residents and visitors alike would be encouraged to use the free parking thereby freeing up on-street parking in the town for shoppers.

I would also move to have free parking in the town for the Christmas Shopping period in December for all shoppers and visitors to Athenry".

The following was the Reply:

1. Background Information

The Backlawn Carpark in Athenry, which operates as a Pay & Display Car Park, provides for:

- *92 Car Parking spaces*
- *7 Accessible Car Parking spaces*
- *2 separate Bring Bank areas*

While there are no dedicated Bus/Coach spaces, there is ample room for same

The Pay & Display parking system yields an annual revenue of approx. €6,000.

Management of Backlawn Car Park is administered under the provisions of the Galway County Council Car Park (Backlawn, Athenry) Bye-Laws 2013 which can be found at <http://www.galway.ie/en/services/roads/trafficmanagement/parking/>

Traffic Management Plan for Athenry can be found at <http://www.galway.ie/en/services/roads/trafficmanagement/trafficmanagement/>

2. Maintenance of Backlawn Car Park

The local area office outdoor staff are responsible for all aspects of Car Park maintenance activities. This includes:

- *Weeding*
- *Pot hole repair*
- *Line marking*
- *Grass Cutting*
- *Bring-Bank Clean ups*

3. Trial Free Parking Proposal

The Athenry area office welcomes the proposal to trial free parking at Backlawn Car Park, Athenry. The Car Park, which provides ample car spaces and facilities, is only steps away from footpaths which links the Car Park to the various businesses in Athenry Town.

This free parking trial would provide a timely opportunity to observe, first-hand, the pattern of parking practices within the immediate area, both by Residents, Businesses and Visitors.

It will also provide a real opportunity to gather corresponding data within the time-defined trial period.

Free parking should provide for increased footfall in the areas linked to the town centre and may demonstrate a corresponding impact on local business.

However, the impact of free parking at Backlawn Car Park should be measured to determine the impact on use and availability of Athenry Town centre Car Parking spaces.

4. Measures of Success

Appropriate Measures of Success need to be identified in advance of the trial period. These might include:

- *No. of cars parked at Backlawn Car Park on a daily/weekly basis*
- *Review of on-street Park & Display revenue during the trial timeframe*
- *Business surveys*
- *Shopper/Visitor surveys*

5. Factors to Consider:

- *The Pay & Display system brings in much-needed revenue so we would need to identify an alternative source of funding if this revenue is lost*
- *Additional signage will be required prior to any trial period of free parking*
- *The public will need to be notified*
- *Increased Park & Display enforcement activity by Community Warden service might be considered during the trial period, depending on availability of resources”.*

Cllr. Herterich Quinn said that Backlawn Carpark is not used frequently as a carpark and she said this may be because it is located a distance from the centre of the town. She expressed the view that if parking were free at the carpark, this might entice people to get into the habit of parking there. She also said that it might entice business owners and their staff to park at Backlawn and this would free up parking spaces outside of their premises. She said that if it is found that the free parking on a trial basis from September to November 2019 does not have the desired effect, it could be reverted after Christmas.

Cllr. Cronnelly supported the motion stating that it would not result in reduced revenue for the Council as Backlawn Carpark is not used frequently for parking and, if it results in increased footfall for the town, that is to be welcomed. He said the free parking would encourage people to use public transport from the town more frequently also, and it would be beneficial for schools in the area. Visitors to the town as a result of the Bia Innovator Campus, to be constructed at Teagasc, would also be able to utilise the car park.

Cllr. Carroll said that any measures to help businesses in Athenry should be supported and he was in agreement with Cllr. Herterich Quinn’s proposal. He also said that the free parking should be advertised so that the public are made aware of this initiative.

Cllr. Cuddy said the proposal is very positive and that rates revenue for the Council will be increased if people are encouraged to shop in the town.

Cllr. Collins also supported the Motion. He said that any initiative which frees up parking spaces in the centre of the town and improves accessibility for elderly people and parents with children is to be welcomed as it will give them freedom to shop in the town. He also said that accessibility for people with disabilities is very important.

Cllr. Herterich Quinn said that signage will be required in order to inform the public that parking in the carpark is free from September to November. She said that if the measure proves successful, it should be rolled out to other areas. She expressed the view that any loss in revenue as a result of free carparking could be made up from fines in relation to illegal parking.

Cllr. Dolan agreed that a trial period for the free parking at Backlawn Carpark is a good idea as it will enable the Council to determine if the initiative has a positive effect in relation to parking in the town. He also referred to the fact that the carpark is located close to Kenny Park GAA Stadium and is very beneficial for the public on match days.

Cllr. Charity said he is generally in favour of the proposal, however he was of the view that it would be more appropriate to consider the question of free parking in the town for the Christmas period at Budget time.

Mr. Owens said that the reply given by the Roads Section to Cllr. Herterich Quinn in relation to her Motion indicates that the Council welcomes the proposal and he acknowledged Cllr. Dolan's view that Backlawn Carpark benefits Kenny Park. He also said that the Council recognises that Kenny Park, in turn, benefits the town in terms of spin-off particularly for retail and hospitality.

Mr. Owens acknowledged Cllr. Charity's view that the second element of the Motion proposing free parking in the town for the Christmas Shopping period in December would be more appropriate for consideration by the Members at Budget time.

Cllr. Herterich Quinn said that she would amend her Notice of Motion to exclude the second element in relation to free parking in the town for the Christmas Shopping period and that she would raise this issue at Budget time.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Herterich Quinn, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Cronnelly, the Members **AGREED** the first element of the Motion as follows:

“that Galway County Council would trial free parking in the Backlawn Carpark in Athenry from September to November in order to encourage use of this currently ‘under used’ facility. Business owners, residents and visitors alike would be encouraged to use the free parking thereby freeing up on-street parking in the town for shoppers”.

Municipal District Director's Business & Correspondence

AMD 08

Mr. Owens referred to the Summary Report on the Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2019 which had been circulated to the Members by Ms. Eimear Dolan, Community & Enterprise Department on 4th July, 2019. He said that there were 12 applications for the Town and Village Scheme with 2 no. of these in the Athenry Municipal District: one project in Oranmore where the amount of funding applied for was €200,000 and one in Claregalway where the amount applied for was €100,000. He said a decision on the applications is expected from the Department of Community & Rural Development by the end of September 2019.

Mr. Owens informed the Members that the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government announced the inclusion of 19 new Rent Pressure Zones across the Country from 1st July, including Athenry-Oranmore. He said that a Rent Pressure Zone is a designated area where rents cannot be increased by more than 4% per annum. This applies to new and existing tenancies unless an exemption is being applied.

Cllr. Carroll welcomed the Town & Village Renewal application for Oranmore in the sum of €200,000 and funding of €40,000 from Galway County Council, if the application were successful. Cllr. Carroll commended Ms. Higgins for her initiative in nominating Oranmore and for her work in preparing this application. He asked if there were any plans to increase parking spaces at the station.

Mr. Owens said that the train station car park was provided in partnership with Irish Rail, whereby Irish Rail provided the train station and the Council acquired land for the provision of the carpark. He said that an extension of the carpark would require the purchase of additional land, as the entire footprint of the existing land has been utilised. He said the Planning Section is working on a Framework on the development of Garraun and they will come back regarding proposals under that Framework Plan.

Cllrs. Charity and Cuddy welcomed the applications under Town & Village Renewal and thanked the Council staff for their work in preparing the applications.

Cllr. Cronnelly asked if additional paid car charging points could be provided in Athenry and Ms. Higgins replied that she had included for a number of charging points on the application, however provision of same is the responsibility of the ESB. She said she would contact the ESB with a view to providing car charging points in the Backlawn carpark.

In reply to Cllr. Dolan, Ms. Higgins said that, at the moment, car charging points are part of the ESB infrastructure but that location points are chosen in conjunction with the Council.

In reply to Cllrs. Cuddy and Carroll, Mr. Gavin said that he is investigating the flooding issue on the Garraun road and he also said that trees will need to be removed to enhance the sightlines at the Garraun junction.

Cathaoirleach's Business

AMD 09

Cllr. Cronnelly asked what is the timeframe for the opening of the new link road at the new school development and Ms. Higgins replied that the Consultants are finalising the works with a view to having the new link road open during the summer.

Cllr. Cronnelly also asked could safety audits etc. be undertaken and extra signage be erected around such locations as Castlilampert and he also asked if controlled crossings could be installed in the vicinity of the Raheen Woods Hotel for the new school year.

He said that due to the construction of the new Clarin College, the speed limit sign would need to be relocated to cover the entrance of the new development, and the construction of a new footbridge would be needed urgently before the opening of Clarin College.

Cllr. Herterich Quinn supported Cllr. Cronnelly's views, but asked what implications such developments would have on the adjoining river.

Cllr. Carroll said that he is on the Board of Management for Clarin College, and the development of the school is ahead of target with a finishing date hoped for by the end of the year. The Board are conscious of the safety of students, staff and parents, and he will be able to discuss same at the September meeting.

Cllr. Charity made the following **PROPOSAL**:

"that this Municipal District pass a resolution of support for the Beef Plan Movement in recognition of the protest taking place at Leinster House today in opposition to the EU-Mercosur Trade Deal and further calls on the Government and Minister for Agriculture, in view of the importance of our beef sector to this Municipal District's beef farmers and wider rural Ireland in general, to use all efforts to oppose the ratification of the EU-Mercosur Trade Deal".

This proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr. Cronnelly, and **AGREED**. The Members also agreed that the Motion be forwarded to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Beef Plan Movement.

In reply to Cllrs. Herterich Quinn and Cronnelly, Mr. Owens said that while there is a recognised need for a new fire station at Athenry, no funding has been received and no suitable location has been acquired. He said that Athenry is included in the capital funding plan, however no indication has been received from the Department as to when funding will be provided.

Cllr. Cronnelly said that money has been expended on repairs to the existing fire station, but in his view it is not fit for purpose due to the expanding population in the area it serves.

In reply to Cllr. Carroll, Mr. Pender said that roadworks on the N67 are funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland and were found to be necessary as the surface of the road failed scrim tests.

Cllr. Cuddy said that the roads in Oranmore are in bad condition due to road openings and construction works and Cllr. Carroll agreed. Cllr. Carroll said it would be advisable that communication and forward planning be put in place with all the service providers to work on roads simultaneously.

Ms. Higgins said that utility companies apply to the Area Office prior to works and Conditions are applied in relation to works being carried out.

Mr. Pender, in reply to Cllr. Charity, said that the Part 8 for the Traffic Calming at Claregalway will be placed on the Agenda for the next Council Meeting, but that in advance of that Meeting, the Municipal District Members will be invited to attend a workshop at the National Roads Project Office, Ballybrit, where the proposals would be explained to them.

Cllrs. Cuddy and Cronnelly expressed the view that the budget for roadworks in the Athenry Municipal District falls far short of the required funding needed in order to maintain the roads to an acceptable standard.

Ms. Higgins replied that there had been a 10% increase in funding this year and that the Council can only work within the funding allocated. Mr. Pender said that the Council continues to seek additional funding from Government for roadworks.


Mr. Pender, in reply to Cllr. Cuddy, said that the Council has written to Transport Infrastructure Ireland to initiate the Relief Road for Claregalway, but no reply had been received to date.

Cllr. Herterich Quinn asked if there is a plan in place regarding Heritage works for the Municipal District and Ms. Higgins replied that the Heritage Officer will reply to her in this regard.

The Cathaoirleach thanked all for their contributions to the Meeting.

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Approved by:


CATHAOIRLEACH

Date: 10-9-2019