

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Galway County Council

Ceantar Bardasach Bhaile Átha an Rí - Órán Mór

Municipal District of Athenry - Oranmore

Minutes of the Meeting of the Municipal District of Athenry - Oranmore held in the Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, on Monday 13th May, 2019.

I LATHAIR:

BAILL: Cllr. F. Kearney (Cathaoirleach)
Cllr. G. Cronnelly
Cllr. J. Charity
Cllr. M. Kinane
Cllr. M. Noone

APOLOGIES: Cllr. P. Feeney
Cllr. J. Cuddy

OIFIGIGH: Mr. M. Owens, A/Director of Services,
Mr. D. Mitchell, Senior Engineer,
Ms. M. Ní Chionna, 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,
Ms. V. Loughnane, Senior Planner
Ms. H. Fox, Executive Planner,
Ms. M. Doddy, Conservation Officer,
Ms. C. Hannon, Assistant Staff Officer,
Mr. B. Corcoran, Assistant Planner,
Mr. N. Madden, Broadband Officer,
Mr. C. Skehan, Conservation & Amenity Advice Service (C.A.A.S.)

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

To confirm Minutes of the Athenry Oranmore Municipal District Meeting held on 11th March, 2019 **AOMD 1865**

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cuddy and **SECONDED** by Cllr. Cronnelly, the Minutes of the Athenry Oranmore Municipal District Meeting held on 11th March 2019, were **AGREED**.

Suspension of Standing Orders **AOMD 1866**

It was **PROPOSED** by the Cathaoirleach, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Noone, and **AGREED**, that the Standing Orders of Athenry Oranmore Municipal District Council be suspended so that Item No. 3 on the Agenda be taken next.

Landscape Character Assessment – Presentation by Mr. Conor Skehan, CAAS, on behalf of Galway County Council. **AOMD 1867**

Ms. Fox advised the Members that as part of the review of the County Development Plan 2015-2021, the Planning Department was reviewing and updating the existing Landscape Character Assessment. She explained that the current Landscape Character Assessment had been in place since 2003 so it was important to update the document so future policies could be made in line with same.

Mr. Skehan advised the Members that the existing maps for the Landscape Character Assessment had been circulated to the Members together with a colour map showing the work carried out to date in reviewing the Landscape Character Assessment. He stated that public consultation would commence the following day (14th May 2019). He explained that by carrying out this work it would assist the Planning Staff to make consistent decisions, would assist with making policies in the future. He referred to the lines on the maps, advising that these were very important and would need to be created as scientifically as possible. He commented that the public are concerned about lines and boundaries on maps so therefore these maps should be created to give clarity to people and prevent people being concerned about same. He highlighted that CAAS Ltd had been responsible for carrying out about one third of the LCA's for the country to date and were aware that boundaries can be very difficult. He explained that this was a document to be used to prepare various policies and plans in the future so the input from the Elected Members and public was important. He stated that it was the chance for the people of Galway to inform the outside world what's important to them. He said that this was a working landscape, it looks beautiful because of the people that look after it and work on it, farming, heritage etc. He advised that the map before the Members was the first draft and highlighted that there were names being used describing some parts of the County, e.g. Wet Lowland and he explained that these names would be looked at again during consultations before being finalised. He explained that the next step was to break the map down into smaller units and finalise same.

Cllr. Kinane stated that she was concerned about being at the mercy of maps as when a line is drawn on a map it can have huge consequences. She asked how seriously would the comments be taken on board in relation to this matter. She advised that coastal erosion was a serious concern at present and going forward attention needs to be put on same.

Cllr. Charity explained that he had spoken on this matter at the Strategic Planning Committee Meeting recently. He stated that as this document was part of the County Development Plan process then he would expect County Planners to refer to this document when making decisions in the future. In this regard, he stated he would have concerns about this document, in particular the parts of the County where it is difficult to obtain planning permission. He raised concerns about the public consultation process, he asked what input the average person on the ground has on this document going forward. He also stated that the land differs widely in the County so local knowledge would be key.

Cllr. Cronnelly commented that carbon footprint was taken into consideration with planning applications regarding forestry, wet bog-land etc. He stated that he was concerned in relation to some areas and advised that local knowledge would be very important. He referred to the carbon directive document and asked would it be taken into consideration, e.g. having conditions put in place on planning decisions that trees would be re-planted in the near future.

Mr. Skehan referred to the question on coastal erosion and advised that there were two types of shore, soft and hard shores. He advised that there were deeper policies on this matter when they appear on a map. He explained that by carrying out this work now it would help in the future to make better decisions and would be a vessel for future policies. He commented that maps can take control away from people making decisions, but this document would allow people to take control on this matter at least. He explained that Members had been consulted with initially to discuss this work and the public consultation would be taking place next. He advised that there needs to be some flexibility allowed at a boundary area on these maps, i.e. two fields in different areas. He agreed with the Members that local knowledge was very important for this document and that Galway County Council were correct in creating this document before the County Development Plan.

Cllr. Noone queried if these maps would affect planning applications in the future. He stated that Planners could see out on the ground what the condition of the land was and therefore it was important that they could still go out and visit the land before a decision was made on a planning application. He asked what was being referred to in relation to the viewpoints mentioned.

Cllr. Kearney stated that he had the same concerns as Cllr. Noone in relation to this document possibly restricting planning permission in the future and also wanted to know about the viewpoints mentioned.

Mr. Skehan referred to the viewpoints and he explained that the map handed out to Members shows the existing viewpoints in County Galway. He explained as part of the work of creating this document, all of these viewpoints would be looked at to determine if the views still existed. To date it has been found that some of these views were no longer relevant as something was now blocking the focal point and it was also found that some views were not listed at all, i.e. Kylemore Abbey. He explained that these maps would normally be used by outside Bodies, so it was important to show others what is important to us as a County.

Cllr. Kearney thanked Mr. Skehan, Ms. Fox and the staff from the Planning Department for the presentation and all the information provided on this matter. He wished everyone well for the future with this project. He stated that protecting the landscape was an important issue but we also need to look after local people and ensure residents can remain living in the area.

Strategic Housing Development Application to An Bord Pleanála – 212 Residential Units at Moneyduff and Oranhill, Oranmore. **AOMD 1868**

Ms. Loughnane outlined that there was a Strategic Housing Development (SHD) Application currently with An Bord Pleanála for 212 Residential Units at Moneyduff and Oranhill, Oranmore. She advised that the 212 units were made up of 156 houses and 56 apartments together with a creche. She highlighted that this was the second SHD application made on this site, the previous application was refused for two reasons, both on ecology. She stated that there was a designated website to view the plans and documents at www.arlumoranmorehousingdevelopment2.com and also a hardcopy of the plans and documents were available for viewing at the Planning Department public counter. She advised that an EIAR and EIS were also submitted along with the application. She explained that the final date for submissions was the 17th May 2019 at 5.30pm, so any comments the Members wished to make on this application would be noted and included in the submission from Galway County Council.

Cllr. Kinane explained that she had contacted An Bord Pleanála in relation to this application to clarify some issues. She said in view of the well documented housing crisis that exists at present, she had no concerns in relation to the number of houses being applied for but stated that there are quite a number of houses in Oranhill already with a lack of services. She felt that this application should not be granted unless a playground facility was put in place. She referred to the outdoor areas on the map and stated she hoped that the outdoor facilities would have a playground, however based on the current maps this was not the case. She explained that the residents were hopeful that a playground would be put in the outdoor play area but she asked that this concern be included on the submission as she does not want the residents having false hope. She highlighted that it was essential that a play area be included. She also stated that there should be a neighbourhood centre put in place. In relation to traffic management in Oranmore, she highlighted that the nearby residents were worried that this development would increase the number of vehicles exiting their estate, and she stated that a new traffic management plan would need to be put in place. She explained that there was a lot of confusion among locals on this matter. She stated that she would be submitting an observation herself to An Bord Pleanála on this application but also wanted her concerns included in the submission from Galway County Council. She reiterated that a very strong submission should be made on behalf of Galway County Council in relation to this application because, based on the previous refusal, it appears that An Bord Pleanála did not take the comments on board, as ecology was the only reason given for the refusal so she asked that a stronger submission now be sent.

Cllr. Charity commented that it was positive to see a housing development being applied for during a housing crisis however he was concerned about 212 houses, he asked would any of these come in under an Affordable Housing Scheme in order to allow younger couples to move in to the area and contribute to the area. He stated that 212 extra units would bring in roughly 1000 extra people to the area, given the lack of facilities there should be thought and consideration given to this. He also queried the extra traffic generated by this development, he stated there was currently a traffic problem in Oranmore so queried if a traffic management plan had been submitted with this application, if not then the traffic management plan for the area would need to be revisited, especially if there was to be similar developments in the future for the area.

Cllr. Cronnelly agreed with the Members in relation to traffic management. He asked how many houses would come in under the 175 sq.m in line with the Rebuilding Ireland loan.

Ms. Loughnane confirmed that there were just two reasons for refusal on the previous application and both reasons were based on ecology. She explained that there was a submission made by Galway County Council on the previous application which included the concerns in relation to a playground. She advised that, based on the current plans, it did show a playground area, but in line with government legislation, all estates now need to be made suitable to be taken in charge. She explained that An Bord Pleanála had made this a condition on recent applications regarding the estate being suitable to be taken in charge, however in relation to playgrounds these would not be suitable due to insurance issues. In relation to the request for a neighbourhood centre, she advised that An Bord Pleanála would have no control over conditioning same. In relation to the query on traffic, she advised that a traffic assessment had been included with the application and was also considered on the previous application. She advised that there was no Affordable Housing Scheme available at present, but as per legislation 10% of the development would be provided for Social Housing. She confirmed that the majority of the units would be under the 175 sq.m. She also advised that the area engineer should be contacted to discuss revisiting the traffic management plan for the area. She explained that all the comments made today would be included in the submission from Galway County Council.

Cllr. Kinane said that An Bord Pleanála do not request Further Information on applications, therefore she felt it was very important that as much information as possible be included on the submission. She advised that the developers had placed a full-page advertisement in the paper advising the public of the proposed development and stating it would be in line with the current Oranmore Local Area Plan. She stated that local people believe that there will be a playground in the development, but as per An Bord Pleanála, there are only play areas on the plan and not infrastructure at a playground.

Ms. Loughnane advised that, in line with legislation, the developer was obliged to advertise the proposed development. She explained that numerous meetings have taken place between An Bord Pleanála and the developer and also the developer and the relevant departments within Galway County Council. She said that the process was open and transparent and people can go online and check the statement of consistency in relation to this development. She explained that the Planning Authority could support a playground, but under the legislation for estates to be taken in charge, the insurance would be a restriction. She stated that she would include all of the Members comments in the

submission from Galway County Council and ask that infrastructure would be included in the playground.

Cllr. Kearney thanked Ms. Loughnane for the information provided on this matter and stated he would like to see this development going ahead in order to help with the current housing crisis.

Update on National Broadband Plan by Galway County Council Broadband Officer. **AOMD 1869**

A presentation was made by Mr. Noel Madden, Broadband Officer with Galway County Council.

He said that the National Broadband Plan is a Government Policy that aims to ensure that every home, school and business in Ireland, regardless of how remote or rural, has access to high speed broadband. This is being achieved through a combination of Commercial investment across the Country and State Intervention in those areas where commercial operators acting alone are unlikely to invest.

Cllr. Charity said that the Government in 2014 promised that 82 towns and villages in Galway would have fibre optic broadband provided, but to date, this has not happened. People are angry due to the two-tier system he said, where a certain number of houses on a road have fibre optic and others do not. He said the EIR Fair Usage Policy would only allow for 10 minutes usage before the premium rate comes into place. Cllr. Charity also said that he has no faith in the National Broadband Plan.

Cllr. Kinane said she had received numerous queries in regard to broadband, and she expressed the view that everyone in the Country deserves to have a proper broadband service, regardless of where they live.

Cllr. Cronnelly said that rural Ireland and, in particular schools and people working from home, are at a severe disadvantage at not having broadband.

Mr. Madden replied that in April 2017, EIR made a Commitment Agreement with the Minister for Communications, that they would provide 300,000 homes and businesses in rural Ireland with access to high speed broadband. He said that an Interactive Map is available at www.dccae.gov.ie indicating the following:

Amber areas: areas which are the target for State Intervention as outlined in the National Broadband Plan

Blue areas: areas where commercial operators are delivering or have indicated plans to deliver high speed broadband

Light Blue areas: areas where EIR has committed to commercial rural development plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises.

He said that if the Elected Members or members of the public had any queries in regard to locations omitted from the Interactive map, or any questions in relation to broadband speed, they could contact him by email at nmadden@galwaycoco.ie and he would endeavour to try to get answers to their queries, in his role as Broadband Officer.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Mr. Madden for the presentation and for making himself available to answer queries from the Members and the public.

Notice of Motion: Cllr. M. Kinane:

AOMD 1870

Cllr. Kinane submitted the following Notice of Motion:

"I, Cllr Martina Kinane propose that the Athenry Oranmore Municipal District support her request for the Protected Structures status (RPS 3027) of the stone boundary walls and entrance to Renville House, Renville, Oranmore, Co. Galway be removed from Galway County Council Protected Structures Listing".

Cllr. Kearney referred to the Notice of Motion and advised that the following was the Council's reply:

Reply to NOM

"There is a statutory process under Section 55 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) which is undertaken as part of an annual review of the Record of Protected Structures in which structures can be added or removed from the Register of Protected Structures .

There is no necessity to remove the house and its setting from the Register to carry out the proposed works, which are the subject of ongoing discussion with the Area Engineer".

Cllr. Kinane acknowledged the reply received. She explained that funding had been received under the Community Involvement Scheme and in order to carry out works the wall may need to be moved back. She therefore requested that the structure be removed from the Record of Protected Structures so works could be carried out.

Ms. Loughnane advised that in order to remove a record from the Record of Protected Structures, the statutory process would need to be followed and would take considerable time complete. She referred to the written reply given to Cllr. Kinane. She said that a discussion had already taken place on this matter and it was not the policy of the Council to discuss an individual cases at Meetings of the Council.

Ms. Doddy stated that she had discussed this matter with the area engineer and that numerous issues had been discussed and a final proposal was awaited.

Ms. Loughnane advised that there may be planning issues also to deal with. She explained that a correct methodology needs to be agreed and careful consideration given to the matter. She advised that the interested parties need to sit down together and discuss the matter in detail.

Municipal District Director's Business & Correspondence

AOMD 1871

Mr. Owens advised the Members that a reply had been received from the ESB in relation to their Resolution made at the Meeting of the Municipal District held on 19th February 2019, as follows:

"That a request be made to the ESB that a public electric car charger port be installed in Clarinbridge"

The reply from the ESB, dated 17th April, 2019, was circulated to the Members.

Cathaoirleach's Business

AOMD 1872

Cllr. Kinane made the following **PROPOSAL**: *"that Galway County Council install a Defibrillator in Renville Park"*. This proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr. Cronnelly and **AGREED** by the Members.

Cllr. Charity made the following **PROPOSAL**: *"that the Athenry-Oranmore District recommend the immediate amendment of the County Playground Policy to provide for additional funding of playgrounds and associated insurance cover in County Galway via development contributions, and particularly in the Athenry-Oranmore area given population levels and the inability to apply for Clár funding. This should be placed on the Agenda as an item for immediate consideration of the new Council in June 2019"*. This proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kinane and **AGREED** by the Members.

Cllr. Kinane made the following **PROPOSAL**: *"that the Athenry-Oranmore Municipal District write to Marian Chambers Higgins (County Registrar) to request the reinstatement of the polling booth in the Boys School, Oranmore, as the polling station for Beech Grove Estate, Coill Clocha Estate and Oranhill Estate"*. This proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr. Charity and **AGREED** by the Members.

Cllr. Noone asked if burial ground land could be purchased through the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process, as the situation in Claregalway burial ground is now very urgent. He asked if the Members could decide to go through the CPO process.

Cllr. Charity and Cllr. Kearney also agreed that both Claregalway and Annaghdown burial grounds need to be dealt with urgently.

Mr. Owens, in reply to Cllr. Noone's query, said that it was a matter for the Executive to decide whether a CPO should be issued in relation to purchase of land.

Cllr. Cronnelly expressed concern regarding the issues which have arisen between the Government and the Community Employment Scheme Supervisors, as the Community Involvement Schemes do great work in localities. Cllr. Kearney agreed.

Cathaoirleach Kearney stated that this would be his last Meeting as he was not running for re-election in the Local Elections. He thanked his fellow Councillors for all of their support and co-operation during his term on the Municipal District Council. He wished the outgoing Councillors well both in retirement and those running for re-election. He thanked the Directors of Service, Mr. Peter Gavican and Mr. Michael Owens, for their guidance and support during his five years as a Member of the Athenry Oranmore Municipal District and he also thanked Ms. Eimear Dolan, Ms. Rose O'Boyle and Ms. Geraldine Healy for their support as Meetings Administrators during this period. He thanked especially the Staff of the Municipal District Office, both indoor and outdoor staff, for their diligent work during challenging times due to lack of resources. He also wished to thank the media for attending the Meetings of the Municipal District and for ensuring that the public were kept up-to-date on matters arising during the Meetings.

Cllr. Noone, Cllr. Charity, Cllr. Kinane and Cllr. Cronnelly all paid tribute to the outgoing Cathaoirleach on his retirement and wished him good health in the future.

Cllr. Noone said that he also was not running for re-election and he wished to thank Members and Staff for their hard work and co-operation during his term on the Municipal District Council. He said he especially wished to thank Mr. Owens for his support and kindness which he very much appreciated.

Mr. Owens, on behalf of staff of Galway County Council, wished Cllr. Kearney, Cllr. Noone and Cllr. Feeney well on their retirement as Elected Members and wished Cllr. Cuddy, Cllr. Kinane, Cllr. Cronnelly and Cllr. Charity well on their election campaigns.

He said that this was the 50th Meeting of the Municipal District since it was established following the 2014 Local Elections. He outlined that the Members dealt with a wide range of topics including traffic management, funding, Renville Park, Burial Grounds, Flooding, Playgrounds, Housing Estates, Town & Village Renewal, Events to commemorate the 1916 Rising, Budgets and Roads Programme. He said that they carried out their role as Elected Members very diligently and it was evident that they wished to ensure that the people of the Municipal District were well served by the Council.

Criochnaigh an Cruinniu Ansin

APPROVED BY: *J. Cuddy*

DATE: 10/9/2019.

