

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara **Municipal District of Conamara**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held in the Council Chamber, Aras an Chontae, Galway on 12th February 2016 @ 2.00 p.m

ILATHAIR:

Baill: Cllrs. E. Mannion Cathaoirleach,
S. Walsh, T. Welby, S. Ó Tuairisg, N. Thomas,
S. Ó Cualáin, T Ó Cuarraoin, T. Healy, N. Byrne.

Oifigh: G Mullarkey, Head of Finance
J. Leahy, Senior Engineer Roads
P. Breathnach, S.E.E Conamara
J. Coyle, Area Engineer, S. Conamara
T. J Redmond Area Engineer, N. Conamara
M. McGann, Meetings Administrator

Apologies: L. Gavin, Director of Services

1. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11-12-2015

CMD 16001

On the proposal of Cllr. S. O'Tuairisg and seconded by Cllr N. Byrne, the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11th December 2015 were adopted.

2. Matters arising from the Minutes

CMD 16002

Comh. S. O'Tuairisg requested further clarification in regard to the proposed works for Ceibh Inis Oirr and was advised by J. Leahy that an €8m allocation had been made under the Government's Capital Investment Plan. The Council has sought clarification from the Department in relation to the specific projects the funding relates to as part of the overall funding for the islands.

Comh. S. O'Tuairisg raised the issue of flooding in Baile na hAbhainn and requested an update. In reply, P. Breathnach confirmed that the culvert was completely blocked and attempts were made to have it jetted yesterday. An added complication was that there were structural issues with the bridge at Rossaveal which was to be used as a diversion. Both of these works would have to proceed in tandem, unless flood levels receded in the meantime. Contractors would be in place at the earliest opportunity as these were deemed to be emergency works.

Cllr S. Walsh stated that the N59 Oughterard to Maam was a danger to public health due to the condition of the road – he stated that the sections of road which had been done had been to a good standard and expressed the wish that any further works would be to this standard rather than tar and chip which would only last a matter of months. He stated that a special plea should be made to the TII in relation to the stretch of road from Derroura Woods to Maam Cross. Cllr E. Mannion stated that they were all agreed that there was a problem with the condition of this road. In reply, J. Leahy stated that the applications for funding would be discussed as part of the Roads Programme, and confirmed that any roadworks would be to the standard of previous full macadam works.

On the proposal of Comh. S. O’Tuairisg, which was seconded by Comh. T. O’Curraoin, it was agreed that Item 6 on the Agenda would be discussed at this point in the meeting.

3. To approve the Municipal District Schedule of Works 2016 **CMD 16003**

J. Leahy presented a document and associated maps outlining the roads element of the Municipal District Schedule of Works, and the specific allocations for the Conamara Municipal District on Improvement Grants, Tertiary Road Repairs, Restoration Maintenance and National Road allocations.

P. Breathnach outlined that selection was based on need as defined by the Pavement Management System – the roll-out of this system is based on input values for issues such as traffic, skid resistance, etc., and the system then selects the worst portions of road in each area. This is taken in conjunction with particular local issues to determine the roads to be included in the Roads Programme for 2016.

Cllr. E. Mannion thanked the staff of the Roads Unit for the detailed report and the work which went into its preparation, and emphasized the importance of adopting a Roads Programme and carrying out maintenance works on areas in most need, such as the N59 Maam Cross to Clifden route. She expressed disappointment that there was no funding available within the public lighting programme for the provision of additional lights. In reply, J. Leahy confirmed that the total budget for public lighting was €1,022,000 although the expected costs for 2016 were €1.2m with the shortfall being made up by TII funding. He stated that there was no facility for upgrades or new lighting, but the Council would try to achieve some limited upgrade to LED lighting subject to funding.

Comh. S. O’Tuairisg complimented the staff of the Roads Unit for determining funding allocations in great detail but stated that the main problem was the overall lack of funding. A huge allocation was needed in future to maintain roads and avoid a crisis situation as under current funding, it would be 20-30 years between upgrades even though the majority of roads in Conamara could last for a majority of 10 years at most. He expressed disappointment that no regard was made for the fact that roads in the Conamara region were built on bog or rock, and did not last as long as elsewhere. In reply, J. Leahy confirmed that funding was allocated between Municipal District on the basis of the total kilometers of roads in each region as this was deemed the fairest method. In relation to a query from Cllr S. O’Tuairisg regarding the inclusion of operational costs in the Council’s funding allocation, J. Leahy confirmed that these were charges which cannot be claimed against grants and the Council must bear these costs - this was a national requirement and had always been the case.

Cllr. S. Walsh stated that the hard work of Council staff during the flooding crisis was greatly appreciated. Cllr. Walsh wished to clarify that the €30,000 funding specified for the R336/LS5207 Junction of Road to Airport was the junction at Tigh Tommy's which was the next one after the airport. He welcomed the allocation for Corbally Bridge, which although insufficient, was a welcome start to these works. Cllr. Walsh queried J. Leahy's confirmation that any reduction in the income from parking fees would result in a consequent reduction in the Council funding allocation, and J. Leahy confirmed that as the decision regarding pay parking was made at plenary council level, any consequent reduction in income and allocations would affect all districts equally. In relation to Cllr. Walsh's expressed concerns regarding Notice of Motion monies remaining available where there were delays in assessment of works, J. Leahy confirmed that the October deadline is for accounting purposes only, and the Council will continue to honour all commitments made regarding Notice of Motions in progress.

Cllr. N. Byrne thanked the Council Officials for their work input into the Roads Programme and appreciated that the programme was drawn up in the context of budgetary constraints. Cllr. Byrne expressed disappointment at the omission of Homefarm Road and Drumaveg Road from the 2016 Roads Programme. In reply, J. Leahy advised that these roads would be considered if there is any additional funding allocated in 2016. Cllr. Byrne also queried whether funding of €300,000 for works at Clooniffe, Moycullen, were part of the Moycullen Online Improvements works in progress or whether these were additional works. J. Leahy replied that works at Moycullen are not included in this year's allocation, but it is understood that it is earmarked by the Government for future funding.

Cllr. T. Healy expressed his respect for the local engineers in the preparation of the Roads Programme and the philosophy that carrying out improvements and maintenance at this stage would save on higher expenditures at a later date, and stated that it was frustrating that this philosophy was not being assisted due to budgetary constraints and cuts. He welcomed the national Speed Limit Review and the fast reaction times of the Council for issues reported on *fixmystreet.ie* and hoped that these reported issues would tie back into pothole maintenance and avoid longer-term expenditure issues. He welcomed the funding allocations for Shanakeever, Ballinakill, Cashleen and Ervallah (Erlagh), and in relation to the latter expressed the wish that consideration be given to carrying out works at the pier in conjunction with the roadworks.

Cllr. S. O'Cualain thanked the Council Officials for the report and maps, and expressed his disappointment that although approximately €150m was being received annually by the State for motoring-related taxes, the grant allocation to the Council was €18m. He stated that the vast majority of the R336 to Maam, and the R340 was in bad condition, and the Department and TII Officials should be invited to Conamara to see this at first hand. Cllr. O'Cualain also stated that the Council need extra personnel to work on the roads, and in particular there was a lack of foreman and supervisors which meant they were too far removed from the workers on each site. In reply, J. Leahy stated that it was unlikely that extra staff resources would be made available.

Cllr. N. Thomas thanked the Roads staff for their detailed report, and expressed his disappointment at the available budget for roadworks. He stated that the recovering economy was not reflected in the available funding, and the Council was fighting a losing battle on road maintenance due to the degradation of roads between maintenance cycles. Cllr. Thomas enquired if there was any surplus funding in hand in the Winter Maintenance Programme as a result of the mild winter and if this could be retained for future years. In reply, J. Leahy

confirmed that although there were no labour costs yet, certain expenditures would have to be incurred in any case, e.g. on salt, and it was planned to use any savings when applying for additional maintenance monies under the Pilot Maintenance Programme. Cllr. Thomas stated that the Council needed a strategy to deal with bad weather as it was impacting on services such as School Buses, with threats to pull these services in Moycullen / Oughterard when routes were dangerous due to ice, or verge trimming not done. In addition, as part of maintenance programmes, some areas have a policy in place to clean gullies, whereas Moycullen/Oughterard do not appear to have any policy in this regard. Cllr. Thomas also expressed disappointment that there was no funding for new public lighting, and highlighted that a change to LED lighting would be more energy efficient and lead to decreases in energy costs over the years, and an application should be made on this basis for Departmental funding.

Cllr. Welby welcomed the allocation of €250,000 under the Oughterard Village Upgrade Scheme. Cllr. Welby queried the €1.5m allocated to N59 Clifden to Oughterard Improvement Works, and in reply, J. Leahy confirmed that this was for land purchase. In relation to the planning status of the Maam Cross to Clifden works, he confirmed that the Oral Hearing was in November 2015 and they were awaiting the decision. In relation to the €2m allocation for the Moycullen Bypass, J. Leahy confirmed that planning approval has been received and that this allocation was for land purchase. The funding of €1,000,000 for the N59 Bunnakil to Claremount is for advance works contract. Cllr. Welby queried J. Leahy's statement that the Council was awaiting criteria for the Community Involvement Schemes (CIS) and whether this meant the scheme was being reviewed even though it only involved expenditure of €119,000. In reply, J. Leahy stated that the Council was just awaiting the Circular approving the allocation for this year, and he did not expect any changes to the terms and conditions governing the scheme. In reply to Cllr. Welby's query whether there was discretion if the Contingency Fund of €100,000 wasn't spent, J. Leahy confirmed that the Council generally required more than that but if it was the case that monies were left over, there would be discretion to re-allocate it. In relation to storm damage, Cllr. Welby queried if there were additional requests made to the Department and J. Leahy confirmed that there were separate substantial applications made to the Department for damage and upgrade of roads and a positive response was anticipated. He stressed that this funding is separate to the Roads Programme. Cllr. Welby complimented the maps accompanying the Roads Programme and suggested that it would be useful if each allocation could correspond to a number on the map. In reply to a query from Cllr. Welby regarding taking in charge of roads which had received Notice of Motion funding, J. Leahy confirmed that this was a separate process to be applied for provided the road was up to standard.

Comh. T. O'Curraoin complimented both the indoor and outdoor staff of the Council on the Roads Programme in the context of the available financial and human resources. In relation to human resources, Cllr. O'Curraoin stated that it was impossible for 6-8 employees to cover their existing areas and action was required regarding staffing. In relation to lack of funding, he said that a large portion of motor tax should be retained for roads purposes as the condition of roads was creating a risk of serious accidents.

Cllr. Mannion thanks all the Roads staff for their hard work over the recent tough months. In reply to her query regarding the maintenance situation on tertiary roads, J. Leahy confirmed that in accordance with the Department of Transport Paving Management System, the Council had 1,320 kms of tertiary roads and approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of this stock was in the orange/red category and in need of intervention. The remaining roads in the blue/yellow category are good due to the Council's policy to concentrate on upgrade/maintenance works

of our current stock rather than LIS. Cllr. Mannion queried the statement in the Roads Programme that funding by TII for Motorway & National Roads was down 49% on 2015, and in reply, J. Leahy confirmed that the funding in 2015 was €35m and the funding in 2016 was listed as €17m but this was exclusive of the allocation for the Gort-Tuam Motorway, which if included, brought the allocation to more than the 2015 level. Cllr. Mannion confirmed that there was no basis to reports that Citylink were withdrawing Bus services due to the condition of roads.

Cllr. E. Mannion queried the costs for operation of the Civic Amenity Site in Clifden and stated that 2 days opening per week was insufficient, especially as there were no bottle banks elsewhere in Clifden and the lack of access was leading to illegal dumping. In reply, G. Mullarkey confirmed that there was a single contribution by the Council of €83,000 towards the Civic Amenity Site in Clifden, and the remaining €200,000 in the budget referred to the Aran Islands. With regard to the charging by Barna Waste at the site, and the possibility of extending opening hours, G. Mullarkey confirmed that these matters would need to be checked with the Environment Department per the Contract in place with Barna Waste for this service.

Cllr. T. Healy reiterated the need for bottle bank facilities in Clifden, and concern about the operation of the Civic Amenity Site, and confirmed that he had brought these issues to the attention of Mr. J. Cullen, Director of Services.

On the proposal of Cllr. N. Byrne which was seconded by Cllr. T. Welby, the Conamara Municipal District Schedule of Works for 2016 was agreed and adopted without amendment.

4. To approve the 3 Year Multi-Annual Roads Programme CMD 16004

A report and maps on the 3 Year Multi-Annual Roads Programme was circulated at the meeting. P. Breathnach confirmed that surface dressing is included in the Multi-Annual Programme 2017 – 2018, however, it does not include funding for storm/flood damaged roads which are separately funded applications.

On the proposal of Comh. S. O’Tuairisg which was seconded by Cllr. N. Byrne, the 3 Year Multi-Annual Roads Programme was agreed and adopted without amendment.

5. Declaration of Roads to be public roads under Section 11 of the Roads Act 1993 CMD 16005

On the proposal of Cllr. T. Healy, seconded by Cllr. T. Welby, the road commencing at the junction with Local Road L 1102 (E58,510; N258,180) in the townland of Emlagh and extending south for a distance of 280 meters and finishing at E58,470; N257,910 in the townland of Emlagh, was declared to be a public road under Section 11 of the Roads Act 1993.

6. Deletion of routes for the proposed new R336 Galway to Ros a Mhil - CMD 16006

Comh. S. O'Tuairisg stated that this was a huge issue ongoing for 10 years resulting in large tracts of land being frozen for the purposes of planning permission. The last report was in 2009 and there was no progress since that time, and it was now past time that something was done. In light of the fact that funding was not now available, and most of the routes had no possibility of going ahead, he was proposing that some or all routes should be suspended, or the Council should look at other solutions such as using the Moycullen Road or upgrading other roads in the area. Comh. T. O'Curraoin seconded the proposal of Cllr. S. O'Tuairisg and added that it was a simple solution to upgrade the road out by the golf club to exit onto the Spiddal Road.

Cllr. S. Walsh stated that he was in agreement with removing unviable routes, and that there was a duty on the Elected Members to agree a route or likely routes having regard to the SAC designations, and the pinch points at Barna and Spiddal. Cllr. N. Thomas stated that this issue was ongoing for too long and was placing a stranglehold on people in the area. Even though Councillors were being advised that the issue must wait until a bypass route was chosen, he believed that as a bypass route had been chosen as no alternatives were available, and it should now be possible to decide the new R336 route.

Cllr. T. Welby stated that as there was now no funding for such a project, there was no point in discussing these outcomes and there was a clear choice to abandon or modify the routes. Cllr. T. Healy stated that there were a lot of issues in relation to the road such as the number of houses on the route, traffic volumes, low speed limits, and associated safety issues. He agreed with Cllr. Welby that there was an over-subscription to NHA and SAC considerations to the detriment of human habitation and that it was a matter for all Councillors to ensure the political will exists in the next Government to take on this issue.

Cllr. T. O'Curraoin stated that the focus should be on building a new road connecting south and north Connemara and including facilities and services for a railway track, cycle track, broadband.

Cllr. E. Mannion stated that this issue had been on the agenda for 7-8 years at this stage, a delegation had been to Europe regarding the matter, and that the road is needed and Councillors shouldn't pull out as a decision on the bypass is near.

In reply, J. Leahy stated that any route for the R336 would be dependent on the Bypass, and as this link is fixed, a decision must wait until after the route for a Bypass is finalized.

In response, Cllr. S. O'Tuairisg stated that there could be other solutions to the R336 and the issue does need to be raised again to discuss options such as connecting to a roundabout on the western side of the Bypass. Cllr. S Walsh agreed that routes needed to be deleted as non-runners in the first instance, and the other alternative of upgrading other roads would resolve a lot of traffic issues. Cllr. N. Thomas stated again that if there was no alternative to the existing By-Pass route, the Council should be able to move on at this stage.

Cllr. E. Mannion stated that she would seek a meeting between L. Gavin and the Conamara Members to further discuss the matter.

7. Municipal District Director's Business

CMD 16007

8. Cathaoirleach's Business

CMD 16008

Cllr. Mannion extended her congratulations to the Heritage Group in Maam on achieving "Best Heritage Project" at the IPB Insurance and LAMA Community and Council Awards 2016.

Cllr. Mannion extended a welcome to M. McGann as Meetings Administrator and wished S. Groarke a speedy recovery. Cllr Mannion also welcomed J. Coyle to his new role as Executive Engineer in South Conamara and wished him the best.

9. Any Other Business

CMD 16009

Comh. S. O'Cualain raised the issue of flooding in South Connemara on 11th to 12th September 2015 and enquired if the OPW are to draw up a plan for drainage of this area. In reply, J. Leahy stated that these locations are included as part of a very substantial funding application to the Department following the recent flooding and storm damage. The Council is still awaiting a reply.

Comh. O'Cualain enquired whether there was a SAC issue regarding carrying out works at the bridge in Rossaveal. P. Breathnach replied that the NPWS had been contacted in this regard and had set out requirements in regard to an ecologist being on site for screening. The report was being finalized and he did not envisage a delay in the process.

Comh. S. O'Tuairisg enquired whether the Spiddal Traffic Management Plan could be revisited and tweaked to make it more user friendly, and to put in place a plan for emergencies such as the closure of roads as a result of RTA and provision of alternative routes.

Cllr. T. Healy raised the issue of the condition of the road surface on the N59 from Recess Village to the quarry for a distance of approximately 1 mile, where there was a risk of aquaplaning especially in heavy rainfall which was a safety issue.

On the proposal of Cllr. N. Thomas and seconded by Cllr. T. Welby, the following motion was agreed for referral to the TII:

"That the Municipal District of Conamara would formally apply to the TII (NRA) to have the design of the new junctions in Moycullen, where the current works are taking place, altered in a manner that would make them safer for all motorists to use, as in their current state they are not fit for the purpose of safety improvements for road users. Particular attention should be taken to the junction at Kilagoola as this junction has the highest volume of traffic."

CROCHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN