

Minutes of Roads and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee
Meeting held on 13th October 2015

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE
GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Roads & Transportation Strategic Policy Committee Meeting
held on 13th October 2015**

I LÁTHAIR:-

Baill: Cllr Michael Maher, Chairperson
Cllr Joe Byrne
Cllr Des Joyce
Cllr Martina Kinane
Comh Seosamh Ó’Cualáin
Cllr Peter Roche
Mr Byran Egan
Mr Tom Madden

Oifigigh: Mr Liam Gavin, Director of Services
Ms Rita Gately, Veterinary Officer
Ms Nuala Heffernan, Administrative Officer

**1. Minutes of Roads and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee meeting 01st
September 2015.**

The minutes of the Roads Strategic Policy Committee meeting held on the 01st September 2015 were proposed by Cllr Roche, seconded by Cllr Byrne and agreed.

Matters arising

Cllr Maher referred to the decision made at the SPC meeting on 01st September regarding the amendment of pay parking bye-laws in County Galway. He said that the Roads SPC had recommended that 2 hours free parking from 9.00a.m. to 11.00a.m. be provided in all the towns in the County. At the plenary Council meeting this proposal was rejected and an alternative proposal to allow 2 hours free parking at any time was adopted. He said that the SPC had discussed the various parking options, as was their remit, and had made its recommendation. He said that any proposals from the SPC should be supported at the plenary Council or it would bring the purpose of the Roads and Transportation SPC into question. He advised that as Chair of the Roads and Transportation SPC, he would not be bringing any further proposals from it to the plenary Council without the 100% support of the members of the SPC.

Minutes of Roads and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee

Meeting held on 13th October 2015

Mr Gavin reminded the meeting that the purpose of the SPC is to develop policy. He advised that it was expected that the SPC would develop and agree policy and recommend it to the plenary Council for their adoption. He commented that if the SPC is to be of value, policies created by it should be fully supported by the members of the SPC.

Cllr Roche said that he had expressed his annoyance at what had happened at the plenary Council meeting at the subsequent meeting of the Municipal District of Tuam. He expressed the opinion that a charge of €2 for an hour of parking is not a big burden. He said that the impact of losing an income of €500,000 would mean relinquishing five roads schemes in each Municipal District. He confirmed that the decision of the SPC was made based on the least impact on the income of the Council. He reiterated that decisions made by the SPC must be agreed to at the plenary Council or else the SPC has no authority.

Cllr Kinane said that her political party decided to vote against the decision of the SPC, but that she herself had abstained from the vote. She said that she agrees with Cllr Maher, that the decision made brings into question the role of the SPC. She stated that a mistake had been made and that the Council should change the decision and that she would do whatever is required of her to make this change happen.

Cllr Joyce stated that he was in agreement with the previous speakers and that he had said so at the Municipal District of Tuam meeting. He said that the Council cannot afford the reduction in the annual budget of €500,000.

Cllr Byrne said that he was not aware that there was a party whip in place for the vote. He said he was not aware of the potential loss of income as the documentation provided referred to a loss of €119,000. He expressed the opinion that there should be full time monitoring of pay parking in the towns at all times. He said that if the proposed change was implemented that there would be no requirement for Community Wardens to be present on the street until 11.00a.m. as free parking applies from 9.00a.m. to 11.00a.m. He said that he had met representatives of businesses in Gort who had advised him that their businesses were decimated and that they were of the opinion that the introduction of free parking would be of considerable benefit to them. He said that there was huge support at the plenary Council for the proposal to introduce 2 hours any time free parking.

Mr Madden said that, as the proposer of the option to allow free parking for 2 hours from 9.00a.m. to 11.00a.m., he is aghast at the decision of the plenary Council to ignore this decision of the Roads and Transportation SPC.

Mr Gavin confirmed that continuous monitoring of pay parking would be required if 2 hours free parking at any time was introduced from 9.00a.m. as it would be necessary to monitor when people park in the town. He stated that he had advised the plenary Council of the implications of this proposal. He said that the Council was now obliged to put bye-laws in place to implement the decision made at the meeting. He confirmed that the decision could not be revisited for 6 months as per the Standing Orders of the plenary Council. In response to a query from Cllr Roche, Mr Gavin advised that the Finance Officer was now preparing a budget based on a

Minutes of Roads and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee

Meeting held on 13th October 2015

reduced income of €500,000. Cllr Byrne enquired about the possibility of getting a ticket from the pay and display machine which allows for 2 hours free parking. Mr Gavin said that the options were being looked at. Mr Gavin advised the members, in response to a query from Cllr Byrne, that the potential loss of €500,000 was arrived at by considering the potential loss of income in car parks and the need to provide continuous monitoring.

Comh Ó Cualáin expressed his disappointment that the decision of the SPC was not followed through by the plenary Council. He said that it was a vote of no confidence in the SPC.

2. Special Speed Limits Bye-Laws – Housing Estates

Mr Gavin advised the SPC that Galway County Council is carrying out a review of speed limits in the County, at the request of the Department of Transport. The first stage of this review is to ask Councillors to make submissions on speed limits to the Roads Section prior to the 18th December. He confirmed that Draft Speed Limit Bye-Laws will be prepared and put on public display seeking submissions following this date. He advised that it is a reserved function to adopt speed limit bye-laws but that Transport Infrastructure Ireland must authorise all speed limits on National Roads.

Mr Gavin said that the Council is going to introduce special speed limit bye-laws for housing estates, which will introduce 30km per hour, or slow zones in housing estates. These are being introduced at the request of the Department of Transport. A draft list had been circulated of the housing estates where the signage will be put in place in 2015. He confirmed that it is anticipated that all housing estates in the County will have signage installed over a three year period, dependant on funding being made available by the Department. He stated that following the completion of this signage programme, consideration would be given to traffic calming options in housing estates where problems with speeding are noted. Mr Egan said that the policing of the speed in estates is an essential part of this process. Cllr Maher said that at the JPC meeting, it was confirmed by the Superintendent that if the Gardai were notified of a speeding problem in an estate, that it would be monitored. Cllr Roche welcomed the programme as it will help safeguard our children. Cllrs Roche and Byrne expressed concern over the staffing requirements to implement this programme of work. Comh Ó Cualáin enquired as to why only two estates in Conamara are included. Mr Gavin confirmed that only estates in the charge of the Council will be included in this programme of work. He said that the work will be completed by contract and therefore will not be a strain on Council staff resources.

In response to a query from Cllr Kinane, Mr Gavin said that the Community Alert scheme is a Garda run scheme and is not under the remit of Galway County Council.

Cllr Roche enquired if Low Cost Safety Schemes applied only to Regional Roads. Mr Gavin said that Low Cost Safety Schemes were also considered for Local Primary Roads.

Minutes of Roads and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee

Meeting held on 13th October 2015

3. Horse Drawn Hackney Carriages Bye-Laws

Ms Heffernan outlined the contents of the proposed draft bye-laws briefly and stated that the intention is to regulate the operation of jarveys, including taking into account the welfare of the horses. Comh Ó Cualáin said that he was not aware of any welfare issue with the treatment of horses on Inis Mór. Ms Gately said that she received some complaints each year regarding the overloading of carriages during the tourist season. She said that it is the intention to have an information meeting on the island with the jarvey owners when the draft bye-laws are put on public display.

Cllr Kinane enquired if there is a record of the horses being used kept in the Council. Ms Gately advised that there is a legal requirement to have identification for all horses. All horses born since 2009 have to be microchipped and horses born prior to that must have a passport. She said that the database of horses is a national one that can be accessed by Galway County Council.

Cllr Roche referred to the responsibility of the Council with regards to the control of sulky racing. Ms Gately said that enforcement is difficult in relation to sulky racing controls. She advised that the Gardai are also authorised officers in relation to animal welfare.

Mr Egan referred to proposed draft bye-laws and said that the owners and drivers should be subject to the same rules as those applying for PSV licences. In response to an enquiry from him about the requirement for Garda vetting, Ms Heffernan confirmed that it is stated in the bye-laws that the Council can request all the owners and drivers to comply with Garda vetting. Mr Egan also requested that the Taxi Regulator be consulted for her opinion on the proposed bye-laws. It was agreed to defer a decision on proceeding to public consultation with the proposed bye-laws to the next meeting of the Roads SPC.

4. Skip Bye-Laws

Mr Gavin outlined the contents of the proposed draft skip bye-laws which it is proposed to introduce to regulate the placing of skips on public roads. He advised that these bye-laws have been referred to the Law Agents for their consideration. It was agreed to postpone discussion on these proposed draft bye-laws to the next meeting of the Roads SPC.

5. Allocation of Roads Funding

Mr Gavin read through the document prepared on the alternative ways of allocating Roads funding. He outlined that the traditional method of apportioning the funding was on a per km basis. He said that the real issue is the significant reduction in funding for the repair of roads in recent years, with current funding levels at the same level as 1997. He said that in preparing the report, he had decided that National Roads funding provided by Transport Infrastructure Ireland took into account where traffic volumes are heaviest and that he did not suggest any alternative to this.

Minutes of Roads and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee

Meeting held on 13th October 2015

Cllr Byrne referred to the National Roads that will be downgraded to Regional Roads when the new M18/M17 Motorway is completed. He said that significant funding is required to bring these roads up to standard prior to this downgrading. Mr Gavin advised that the Council were formally objecting to the downgrading of these National Roads, due to the lack of funding available for Regional Roads.

Cllr Kinane thanked Cllr Maher and Mr Gavin for the opportunity to look at different funding distribution options. She said that there is evidence of an issue with insufficient funding for the roads which carry the heaviest amount of traffic, which are in the commuter area for Galway City. She said that she believes that times have moved on from allocating funding on a km basis. She said that the SPC should look at changing this allocation model. She suggested that the option of reallocating an additional 10% to the commuter areas is the correct model to use, as this will solve the problem for these areas.

Cllr Roche said that there is a compelling case for the method of allocation of funding to remain as is. He said that there would be no agreement to reducing the % of funding allocated to the Municipal District of Tuam. Cllr Byrne confirmed that he was also not in favour of amending the method of allocation of roads funding, as it has worked so well over the years. Cllr Joyce referred to the need for all Councillors to look after their own Municipal District and that he is not in favour of changing the current system. Comh Ó Cualáin said that he accepts and understands that Cllr Kinane wants improvements for her Municipal District. He said that while there are not as many roads in the Municipal District of Conamara, the roads are longer and the conditions more difficult. He said additional roads funding should be provided from other sources such as Fáilte Ireland, as the volume of traffic in Conamara has increased significantly due to the success of the Wild Atlantic Way project.

Mr Madden enquired if there was any other mechanism that could be derived to allocate funding other than those presented in the report. Mr Egan said that he is in agreement with separating the issue of funding for National and Non-National Roads. He said that traffic counts should be taken on all roads to ensure accuracy of the data. He also suggested that townland population statistics should be measured as this would be directly proportional to the traffic volumes. Cllr Maher said that the report was a first draft and that other options could be looked at.

Mr Gavin advise that whichever method of measurement was used, it would prove that roads closer to the City have heavier usage and any change in the allocation will redistribute the funding towards the roads closer to the City.

Cllr Roche said that it would be wrong to reallocate funding towards the City as it would discourage people from living in rural areas. Cllr Joyce said that if the method of funding allocation was based on population all funding would be allocated to the greater Dublin area. Cllr Kinane requested that the item be on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting of the Roads SPC, as she wants to sort the imbalance of funding. Comh Ó Cualáin said that the current system would be satisfactory if there was an increase in the funding available.

Minutes of Roads and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 13th October 2015

6. Membership of the Roads SPC

Cllr Maher requested that a letter be issued to the two members of the Roads SPC who have not attended any of the meetings since its inception in early 2015, advising them of the requirement that they attend at least two meetings a year. He said that their attendance was required or consideration would be given to requesting the nominating body to review their membership.

It was agreed to hold the next Roads SPC meeting on the 01st December 2015 at 10.00a.m.

Críochnaigh an cruinniú ansin