

**Minutes of the Roads, Transportation & Marine Strategic Policy Committee
meeting held on Thursday 17th December at 10.00 a.m.
The Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, Prospect Hill, Galway.**

I Láthair:

Baill: Cllr. Peter Roche (Cathaoirleach)
Cllr. Geraldine Donohue
Comh. Tomás Ó Curraoin
Cllr. Pat Hynes
Cllr. Jim Cuddy
Cllr. Gerry King
Cllr. Albert Dolan

Oifigi: Mr. Jim Cullen, Director of Services, Infrastructure and Operations Unit
Mr. Damien Mitchell, Senior Engineer, Infrastructure and Operations Unit
Ms. Eibhlin Curran, Administrative Officer, Infrastructure and Operations Unit
Ms. Fintan O'Meara, Senior Executive Engineer, NRDO
Mr. Noel Madden, Broadband Officer, Infrastructure and Operations Unit
Ms. Nora O'Connor, Assistant Staff Officer, Infrastructure and Operations Unit

Apologies: Mr. Kenny Deery
Mr. Diarmaid Kelly

Absent: Mr. Tom Madden
Mr. Martin Gibbons

Cllr. P. Roche offered the sympathies of the SPC to the family of the woman who tragically died in Furbo, on the R336 Bearnna to Spiddal road, the previous evening.

Cllr. P. Roche advised that, with the permission of the committee, the item on the supplementary agenda, 'Consideration of Policy in relation to Taking in Charge of Non-Public Roads' would be brought forward to number two on the agenda.

1. Minutes of meeting of Roads SPC held on 18th September 2020

On the **proposal** of Comh. T. Ó Curraoin and **seconded** by Cllr. G. Donohue, the minutes of the meeting of the Roads, Transportation and Marine Strategic Policy Committee held on 18th September 2020 were agreed and adopted.

Matters arising from the minutes.

J. Cullen clarified that the remote oral hearing for the Galway City ring road recommenced on 12th October and concluded on the 04th November 2020. The team presenting on behalf of Galway County Council (GCC) made a strong case and there were some supportive submissions but equally there was some resistance to the proposal. The decision from ABP is expected by summer 2021.

Comh. T. Ó Curraoin stated that he is in favour of ring road, however, is not in favour of the proposed planned route and the CPO of residential houses. He questioned if there is any plan for those who are subject to CPO that a site can be purchased in the area for them.

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Cllr. J. Cuddy agreed with Comh. T. Ó Curraoin in that he is in favour of a ring road but is not in favour of the proposed route because of its proximity to the city. There must be allowances made for those that have sites in the area due to the development & expansion of the city that may fall within the city but were formally in the county boundary. He stated that there should be concession to those who are discommoded.

In response Cllr. P Roche query regarding signage at exits on the motorway, J. Cullen advised that he raise this issue again at the next TII meeting.

Cllr J. Cuddy pointed out that the issue of bilingual signage on the motorway needs to be addressed, giving the example of 'Baile Chláir' displayed on signs and people not knowing that it is Claregalway.

Cllr. P. Roche advised that this committee had written to the department previously.

J. Cullen advised that this was followed up in correspondence and explained that the bilingual signage cannot be done at present because that would be in breach of the languages act.

2. Consideration of Policy in relation to Taking in Charge of Non-Public Roads.

Cllr. P. Roche outlined that this item was raised at two municipal district meetings, Conamara and Tuam, and it was agreed that the forum for this to be discussed is the SPC.

Cllr. G. King commenced the discussion stating that this subject has been raised on multiple occasions. There are many roads in disrepair, usually short in length but in very poor condition. Councillors have been putting their NOM allocation to get these roads up to standard and Taken in Charge.

Cllr. A. Dolan offered his apologies for his absence at the last SPC meeting and echoed the sentiment of Cllr. G. Donohue. Cllr. A. Dolan asked about the €800,000 in grant funding spent on roads under the Local Improvement Scheme and asked if the Council intends to take these roads as public roads.

Cllr. J. Cuddy stated that there are two separate issues – the roads that are improved through the NOM allocation and the roads improved through the LIS's. There is a stipulation on the LIS that they should not be taken in charge (TIC) and this may require amendment to legislation to allow for LIS roads to be TIC. There is also an emerging issue with financial institutions and closing of sale of properties when road adjacent to the property is not in the charge of the local authority.

Comh. T. Ó Curraoin stated that people have the right to a good road and if GCC does not have the money, it should come from somewhere to maintain the roads. From the planning side, development contributions are very high on individual seeking planning and it seems they get very little in return.

Cllr. G. Donohue concurred with the sentiment of other elected members and added that safety is paramount.

Cllr. P Roche stated that he doesn't see the proposal as an attempt to assist planning applications but something to assist existing users of the roads in question, that everyone is entitled to have appropriate access to their properties.

J. Cullen responded confirming that the Taking in Charge of a road is a reserved function and is exercised on a case by case basis. The Local Improvement Scheme funding is under the Department of Rural & Community Development. The agreement is that the road will not become the responsibility of the local authority; however, technically there is nothing to stop the council from exercising its reserved function.

J. Cullen advised that money is routinely spent on existing public roads rather than on non-public roads. The funding at present is not adequate to fund the existing network and what the elected members are proposing to do is to extend that network further. The existing network would fall into further into disrepair. J. Cullen advised that public liability also must be taken into consideration. There was no funding for LIS for several years and that was the main reason why NOM allocations was being used. Specific funding under LIS was reintroduced by the DRCD in 2017.

Mr. D. Mitchell stated that there has been reluctance to take roads in charge in the context that they cannot manage the road network that they already have. He stated while the number of roads TIC has slowed down over the past number of years it is wrong to state that no roads have been taken into the charge of the Council. There is a process and the same procedure will apply.

J. Cullen advised that as proposals come forward, they would be dealt with on a case by case basis at municipal district level. For each one, there would need to be a technical assessment of the road, some may be straightforward, some may be complicated. There is an administration process that must be followed with respect to the declaration of a road to be made public. This was agreed by the Committee.

3. Draft Policy on Roadside Memorials

D. Mitchell gave an outline of the draft policy on roadside memorials which had been circulated to the committee. D. Mitchell explained that this is an emotive issue and that the council are often contacted by families who want to erect memorials that unfortunately does not comply with regulations and would be safety risks. He outlined that memorials can be a distraction to road users, sight lines can be blocked, etc., therefore, Galway County Council would like to create guidelines and specifications on what is deemed appropriate and these guidelines are set out in the draft policy on roadside memorials.

Cllr. J. Cuddy sought clarity on if memorials built-in to walls are allowed. In response to Cllr. J. Cuddy, D. Mitchell advised that only plaques are permitted. Cllr. J. Cuddy complimented D. Mitchell, J. Cullen and their staff on bringing this draft policy forward.

On the **proposal** of Cllr. J. Cuddy and **seconded** by Cllr. G. Donohue, the policy on roadside memorials was agreed and adopted.

Comh. T. Ó Curraoin & Cllr. G King were excused and left the meeting @ 11.06am

4. Athlone-Galway Greenway

F. O'Meara gave an update on the Athlone-Galway Greenway. He explained that the cycleways and greenways are to be used interchangeably in a strategy for future development

of regional and national greenways. The government are trying to co-ordinate greenways to be developed, using a code of best practice and there is a detailed document setting out the entire process of developing the greenway. There is an emphasis on the use of public lands as opposed to private lands where possible. GCC have Land Liaison Officers specifically to deal with landowners and any issues they may have. The preferred route was identified some years ago, but that project hit resistance from landowners. There is a strong emphasis on consultation with those affected and the emphasis is to acquire the land by agreement.

There is a designated Greenway office setup in Ballinasloe, with currently six staff dedicated to land liaison. Due to Covid19 restrictions, public consultation is being held virtually, by requesting a call back or virtual meeting, as the office is not open to the public however it anticipated that by Q2, 2021, that the staff will be welcoming face-to-face consultation. The next stage is route corridor options and they are looking at using existing public lands along roads and rail line where possible, however it is not possible to go from Athlone to Galway only using publicly owned lands. Acquisitions of land is inevitable, but it is hoped that this can be done by negotiation and agreement with the relevant landowners. The programme set out for the scheme is aiming to have a preferred corridor identified with construction intended to commence by 2024.

Cllr. P. Roche thanked F O'Meara on his presentation and expressed his concern that it is likely that landowners will not be in favour to the disposal of their land based on the previous attempt for this greenway proposal. In response, F O'Meara did acknowledge that there was a residual issue from the last attempt, however with a dedicated team of 6 to deal specifically with land liaison, he is hopeful that acquisitions will done by agreement, but it will take time and by no means a fast programme.

Cllr. J. Cuddy stated that he was glad that there was a commitment to consultation this time and asked who will fund the maintenance of the greenway after it is complete. In response to Cllr. J. Cuddy, F. O'Meara stated that he expects that maintenance of the greenway is likely to be funding by Galway County Council initially and possibly department funding streams may become available, however while acknowledging it must be taken into consideration, the project is not at that point yet.

Cllr. G. Donohue asked if it will be publicised that people have the option to video call. F. O'Meara clarified that the information is on the GCC website and that flyers were sent in through letter boxes, also paper adverts, etc. to let people know that they can call and make an appointment. Due to potential Covid19 restrictions anticipated for January, F O'Meara advised that it could be after March 2021 when they can meet on the ground again.

Cllr. A. Dolan stated that it is good to see that the department is having another go at this. He explained that he attended the consultation in (Raheen Woods Hotel) in Athenry, and coming from a farming background, understands the frustration expressed from some of the landowners. Cllr. A. Dolan advised that they all know this must be done the right way and advise if they, the elected members could assist, they are willing to do so.

Cllr. P. Roche wished F. O'Meara and his team the best of luck with the project.

5. Digital Strategy and National Broadband Ireland (NBI) Update

N. Madden gave a presentation on County Galway's Digital Strategy Policy and an update on National Broadband Ireland (NBI). He gave an overview of why the strategy is being rolled out both from a European and National perspective.

Cllr. P. Roche asked if there is a possibility that all elected members will get a copy of the presentation. N. Madden confirmed that the presentation can be sent out to all elected members via email, but the videos will be too big to send.

J. Cullen confirmed that if the digital strategy is approved by the SPC today, the plan would be for the digital strategy to be put before the plenary council in March.

Cllr. A. Dolan thanked N. Madden for a fantastic presentation, explaining that he has wanted to see a digital strategy along with GCC using the Local Enterprise Office to adapt since the first AGM he attended. Cllr. A. Dolan said that he thinks that the older digital marketing strategies should be retained in pdf format on the GCC website so that people can see the progressions as they occur. N. Madden said that he was not sure if this would be possible but that he can find out from IT.

On the **proposal** of Cllr. A. Dolan and **seconded** by Cllr. G. Donohue, the Galway County Digital Strategy 2020-2023 was agreed and adopted.

6. Any Other Business

Cllr. J. Cuddy asked about reducing the speed limits outside schools from 80km/hr to 50 km/hr in particular Coldwood NS. He asked about the R446 Old Dublin Road, the Craughwell side of the school, where there is serious flooding outside a particular house. He also asked if there were any proposed traffic calming measures for the N83, at McHugh's Pub.

Cllr. A. Dolan queried how they could go about introducing a speed limit of 30km/hr outside schools, while his understanding is that the speed limit review is done every 5 years.

In response to the councillors' questions, D. Mitchell outlined that GCC met with the Board of management of Coldwood N.S. regarding the reduction of the speed limit. In response to the Cllr. J. Cuddy's query about the R446 Old Dublin Road, he said that those works are being carried out by a contractor and he will engage with them on same. As regards any proposed traffic calming measures for the N83, at McHugh's Pub, D. Mitchell advised that he need to bring this to the attention of the TII.

In response to Cllr. A. Dolan's question about 30km/hr speed limit outside schools, D. Mitchell explained that they looked for 50km/hr and this will come under the speed limit review programme. He explained that there are 14 schools on national roads, some being managed by TII and there was an issue at the time when the lower speed limit was requested; he advised that he follow up with the TII.

Cllr. P. Roche Cathaoirleach thanked the committee members for their attendance, participation and engagement throughout the year.

Críochnaigh an cruinniú ansin.

12.05p.m.

Approved by:


Cllr. Peter Roche
Cathaoirleach

Roads & Transportation Strategic Policy Committee

Date:



