

Minutes of the Municipal District of Ennis Meeting held on Tuesday December 2nd, 2014, at 3.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Áras an Contae, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare.

Present:

Councillors: J. Flynn, J. Breen, T. Mc Namara, P. Daly, A. Norton, M. Howard, P. Murphy, C. Collieran Molloy.

Officials: Ger Dollard, Director of Services, Eamon O’Dea, Senior Executive Engineer, Catherine O’ Hara, Meetings Administrator & Fiona Whelan, Staff Officer.

Item No. 1. Minutes of November monthly meeting held on the 4th of November, 2014.

It was proposed by Cllr. Pat Daly and seconded by Cllr. Ann Norton that the Minutes of the monthly meeting held on the 4th of November, 2014, be agreed and adopted.

Item No. 2 Matters Arising

Noted that a schedule of meetings is to issue in relation to the Clare Co Council Working Group on the Commission for Economic Development in Rural Areas Report and Implementation (Cedra)

Item No. 3. General Municipal Allocation 2015.

Ger Dollard informed the meeting that the full County Council budget had been adopted on the 12th of November, 2014. The Municipal District of Ennis originally had an allocation of €54,000; however, a further €50,000 had been approved now giving a potential total allocation of €104,000.

G. Dollard stated that there are a number of elements involved and suggested the following framework to be considered by the members:

1. The former Ennis Town Council traditionally allocated monies to a number of groups and this could continue but it would be unlikely to be at the same level.
2. Funding for major festivals / events.
3. Community & Arts Grants Scheme which is publically advertised and for which groups etc can apply.
4. Set allocation for Environs of Ennis i.e. Barefield, Clarecastle, Kilmaley, Kilnamona & Quin.

Cllr. Flynn wished to have his objection to the accepting of the budget amount documented.

Members agreed to consider the framework as outlined by G. Dollard.

Item No. 4. Extinguishment of public right of way at St. Michael's Villas under Section 73 of the Roads Act, 1993.

Members discussed this ongoing issue in detail and stated that it was a pity that it had caused a divide in an otherwise very hospitable community. Members wished to support locals on both sides and had met with residents and were now happy that a proposed compromise is to be put in place for a trial period. It is proposed to put a one way system in place, install suitable lighting and CCTV.

G. Dollard informed the meeting that there were 2 key elements involved:-

1. the completion of the Statutory process in relation to the extinguishment of the public right of way
2. Proposed new Roads Scheme at St. Michael's Villas incorporating the elements as listed above.

It was noted that public consultation will be required in relation to a proposed one-way system. It would also need to be decided where the CCTV would be linked to for monitoring and the type of lighting would have to be agreed.

It was proposed by Cllr. Mary Howard, seconded by Cllr. Pat Daly and unanimously agreed not to extinguish the public right of way at St. Michael's Villas under Section 73 of the Roads Act 1993.

Item No. 5. Proposed Pedestrianisation in Ennis for Christmas 2014.

Ger Dollard informed the meeting that following public consultation a number of submissions had been received. These submissions had been considered and the following pedestrianisation of O'Connell Street, Ennis, is now proposed:-

- Saturday 20th of December, 2014, from 12.00 to 18.00
- Sunday 21st of December, 2014, from 14.00 to 18.00
- Tuesday 23rd of December, 2014, from 12.00 to 18.00
- Wednesday 24th of December, 2014, from 12.00 to 18.00

G. Dollard also informed the meeting that a working group is being established in conjunction with Ennis Chamber of Commerce, Street Associations and Clare County Council to assess pedestrianisation, parking and parking fees in Ennis. This project will commence in the New Year.

A public notice will be put in place in relation to all the Christmas arrangements for parking and available car parks.

Members welcomed all the Christmas initiatives including the parking and the street radio. Members also welcomed the proposed study, which will commence in the New Year, in relation to parking, parking fees and pedestrianisation in the town.

This item was noted by members.

Item No. 6. S. 183 of Local Government Act 2001 – Disposal of land at Barefield village to Pat Rosengrave.

This item was proposed by Cllr. J. Breen, seconded by Cllr. A. Norton and agreed.

Item No. 6. (b) Disposal of Site, Wayleave and Right of Way to the E.S.B. for Substation No 037140

This item was proposed by Cllr. J. Flynn, seconded by Cllr. P. Daly and agreed.

Item No. 7. Linkage with An Garda Síochána.

This item was proposed by Cllr. J. Flynn, seconded by Cllr. T. McNamara and agreed. It was agreed to hold quarterly meetings with An Garda Síochána. The first meeting will be held from 2.30pm to 3.30pm on Tuesday 3rd of February, 2015.

Item No. 8 Notices of Motion.

1. Notice of motion submitted by Cllr T. Mc Namara was seconded by Cllr. Norton.

“I call on Clare County Council to repair, pave and remark all the streets in the centre of Ennis, in particular O’Connell Street and Abbey Street.”

Eamon O’Dea, Senior Executive Engineer, replied as follows:-

Works have been carried out by the Council over the past number of years at Lower Parnell Street, Old Friars Lane (beside AIB), Upper O’Connell Street, Lower Abbey Street, Abbey Street car park access road and Abbey Street in Ennis. Surfacing works in parts of the town centre had to be deferred until completion of the OPW Lower Fergus Certified Drainage Scheme and works in areas such as Market Street have been deferred until the Watermain Rehabilitation Scheme is completed. Line marking is carried out each year and work was recently done at Bank Place.

Members stated that the centre of Ennis needs a general upgrade. Footpaths need repair and buildings need to be painted. Funding is an obstacle and it is important that the Block Grant received in the past is in place for 2015.

2. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr C. Colleran-Molloy was seconded by Cllr. Flynn.

“In light of the ongoing situation where businesses are closing down in our town citing high commercial rates and parking costs/capacity being contributing factors, I call on Ennis Municipal District to revisit the issues raised in the Motion I submitted at the October 2014 Ennis Municipal District Meeting seeking a sufficient trial period of reduced parking fees from €1.30 to €1 (possibly the first 3 months in 2015 to permit comparison with parking revenues derived during the first 3 months of 2014), and ask that the Ennis Municipal District be advised of:

- (1)The specific steps necessary to overcome the parking machine software modification needed;
- (2)Parking Bye Laws change required;
- (3)The foreseeable financial effect of such a trial period of reduced parking fees being adopted;
- (4) A projected costing for the advertising of such a trial period of reduced parking;
- AND (4)Whether a portion of discretionary funding (now in the region of 80,000.00)could be ring-fenced to cover a potential negative impact of such a trial period.”

Seamus Halpin, Senior Staff Officer, Roads, replied as follows:-

Following on from the report of Barry Keating Administrative Officer, the Council will arrange for an examination of the software modification requirements on the pay and display machines. The members should note that in 2011 the general maximum parking times were changed from 3 hours to 2 hours in the main car parks. This was reversed in 2012 from 2 to 3 hours. Any amendment to parking fees would require an amendment to the byelaws which is a reserved function. Further matters for consideration in any amendment is the turnover of parking spaces and a consequent reduction in the maximum time stay of 3 hours reintroduced in 2012.

It is proposed to review the Parking Bye-Laws in 2015 with a view to amalgamating former Town Council areas of Kilrush and Ennis with the County. This will involve public consultation with the Bye-Laws going on display for a minimum of one month and a further two weeks for representations. Parking fees and maximum duration for parking times may be considered as part of this review.

Proceeding with the proposed changes would require a change to the software in the pay & display machines. The cost to carry out these equipment changes is approximately €10,000.

It was agreed by members that the working group being established in 2015 will be helpful in resolving the parking issues in the town.

3. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr J. Flynn was seconded by Cllr. McNamara.

“ In light of the urgent need for job creation and protection in the Ennis Municipal District to deal with the 5,000 signing on in Ennis ; that Ennis Municipal District Committee propose that Shannon Commercial properties be requested to invest with Clare County Council in building a roundabout and completing the access road at the Ennis Information Park , Gort Rd ,Ennis. This road works would result in opening up the 25 acres of serviced Enterprise land in their ownership for potential new industries.

Gordon Daly, Senior Planner replied as follows:-

It is acknowledged that completion of the access road into the Information Age Park is important for both the functioning of existing development in the IAP and also to enable future development.

In order to progress this matter the Council has recently entered into discussions with the newly established Shannon Commercial Properties with a view to in the short-term securing the completion of the access road and an entry onto the Gort Road.

The overall development of the site including the need for a roundabout or suitable alternative is also forming part of these discussions. In addition the future development of the IAP is being examined as part of the preparation of the Draft Ennis & Environs Local Area Plan 2015-2021.

4. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr P. Murphy was seconded by Cllr. Flynn.

“I wish to be briefed on the current status of the Ennis South Flood Relief Scheme, what works are to be carried out and what is the anticipated timescale for works to be undertaken. Also, are road improvement works between Kildysart Cross and Ballybeg Cross part of this contract?”

Eamon O’Dea, Senior Executive Engineer, replied as follows:

Funding approval is awaited and we are hopeful that this approval is imminent. Preparation of tender documents is almost completed and the tender process should get underway shortly. We are working towards getting construction underway pending funding approval.

The Ennis South Flood Scheme is on the west bank of the Fergus River from Doora Bridge to the tidal barrage at Clarecastle. The works will include new embankments, back drains, outlets, and facilities to permit the pumping of the back drains, overflow drain from the swallow hole at St Flannans College to the back drains via Tobairteascain and an overflow drain from the Ballybeg Stream adjacent to the swallow hole to the back drains. The works could take 24 months to complete the entire project as there are significant constraints including diversion of existing services, flood levels and environmental requirements.

The overflow drain from the Ballybeg Stream will be constructed on the Kildysart Road from Kildysart Cross to Ballybeg Cross and full road restoration will be carried out at the time that the works are completed on the Kildysart Road.

5. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr A. Norton was seconded by Cllr. Breen.

“That Clare County Council look at putting parking control measures in place at McHugh Villas, Drumbiggle Road so as to allow Residents to park safely. The surrounding area is pay and display and non residents are parking in McHugh’s Villas and clogging up the area for residents.”

Eamon O’Dea, Senior Executive Engineer, replied as follows:

This is an issue in housing schemes and streets adjacent to the town centre. It is not feasible to provide physical measures and enforcement to prohibit parking in residential areas. The only means would be by use parking byelaws for residential parking areas with appropriate parking permits. This would require specific enforcement resources.

There is a need to provide alternative low cost commuter/long stay parking and the council in conjunction with the local business community need to examine all locations adjacent to the town centre that low cost commuter/long stay parking can be provided. It should be noted that low cost long term parking is available at the Island car park on Circular Road – Cloughleigh Road and has available capacity.

6. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr J. Breen was seconded by Cllr. McNamara.

“In view of the fact that there is sewerage laid on from Barefield National School, will the houses between the school and the village be allowed to tap into same?”

Siobhán McNulty, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Water Services Wastewater Operations, replied as follows:-

I wish to advise that while the sewer is dedicated to CCC it has not been taken in charge by IW (it is likely that this process will be concluded within the next 6 months), in that regard any application for connection would be considered to be premature. The sewer from Barefield school to the Ballymaley roundabout is a pumped rising main to which a direct connection cannot be facilitated. There is capacity at the pump station subject to permission to connect to the existing gravity network. It is required that any person wishing to connect to a public sewer must apply for a connection to same, it is not permitted to connect to public water services infrastructure without prior written consent.

7. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr P Daly was seconded by Cllr. Flynn.

“I request the Ennis MD to continue upgrading the road from the exit of Ennis golf club down to the Showgrounds cross, Drumbiggle road”

Eamon O’Dea, Senior Executive Engineer, replied as follows:

Part of Golf Links Road was included in this year’s Ennis Town Council Road works programme, however it was necessary to divert the funding to works at the Tulla Road and Lower Abbey Street. Part of this road will be included in next year’s road works programme, however we have no information from the Department of Transport in regard to specific funding to replace the Block Grant (€339,200 in 2014) that was provided to Ennis Town Council.

8. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr T Mc Namara was seconded by Cllr.Daly.

“In order to address the increasing number of vacant properties around the town of Ennis I call on Clare County Council to introduce a rent waiver scheme that would give a 75% rate cut in year one, a 50% rate cut in year two and a 25% rate cut in year three to traders who set up business it any of these premises that are vacant for more than two years.”

Noeleen Fitzgerald, Financial Accountant, replied as follows:

The proposal of a waiver scheme for Commercial Rates for consideration by the council would have to take into consideration the impact of any such scheme on established businesses in the district, possible relocation of business from other districts, rent levels in the district and any other financial implications arising.

This matter can be further considered but any scheme for the waiver of Commercial Rates requires council approval and also ministerial approval.

Ger Dollard informed the meeting that the Finance Dept. have been doing some work in relation to this matter and are currently working on a scheme or proposal. Any such scheme would require Ministerial approval and would need to be agreed at a full County Council meeting.

9. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. J Flynn was seconded by Cllr. Norton.

In light of the success of Shannon Heritage section of Shannon Airport Group in the development and management of Heritage properties that Ennis Municipal District Committee request Shannon Heritage to engage with the Ennis Municipal District Committee to look at the potential of developing an urban Heritage visitor attraction by utilising the Medieval Streetscape such as at Chapel Lane , Ennis.

Members discussed this motion and supported it.

10. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr P. Murphy was seconded by Cllr. Breen.

“I am requesting that improvement works are carried out to the following footpaths in Clarecastle;

- i) from the Credit Union to the Antique Loft and
- ii) adjacent to 21 Church Drive as you walk in the direction of Wards shop.”

Eamon O’Dea, Senior Executive Engineer, replied as follows:

This work is on the immediate list of footpath work in Clarecastle and work will commence on the Barrack Street, Clarecastle footpath once resources become available.

11. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr J. Breen was seconded by Cllr. Flynn.

“That the road from Raheen Cross to McDonalds Cross at lower Kilnamona be tarred and surfaced dressed”

Eamon O’Dea, Senior Executive Engineer, replied as follows:

The L8286, which extends from the north at the junction with the N85, in the townland of Cloongowna, and ends at Leckaun Cross. The road is narrow and has an overall length of 3.0 km.

The lower section of the road nearest Leckaun Cross is in need of structural works and has been recently patched.

The lower section of the L8286 is in the road works programme next year and parts of the remainder of the road are in the road works programme in 2016

12. Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr P Daly was seconded by Cllr. Colleran Molloy.

“I ask Ennis Municipal District to arrange improved site visibility at the Green Road Junction entering on to the main Tulla road close to Spancillhill Cross”

Eamon O’Dea, Senior Executive Engineer, replied as follows:

The Council was unsuccessful in a Low Cost Safety Scheme application at this junction of the R352 & L83623-0 as there was insufficient accident data. The only other means of funding this work is by use of Discretionary Funds. The Municipal District Office will prepare a preliminary design and estimated cost for the work and place it on a list of works for consideration when funding is available.

Item No. 9. A.O.B.

1. Vote of Sympathy

Cllr. James Breen wished to express members sympathy to the family of the late John Minogue former member of Clare County Council. Cllr. Flynn offered to express sympathy on behalf of the members directly to the family himself.

2. Drehidnagower Bridge.

Eamon O’Dea informed the meeting that due to a major safety concern with Drehidnagower Bridge, the Council has no option but to close the bridge for immediate emergency works. While this is unfortunate and regrettable, it is not optional and the bridge must be closed. Signs are to be erected before the end of the week.

3. Road Signs at Loughville

Cllr. Breen has concern over the visibility of signs at Loughville. Eamon O’Dea is to follow this matter with the NRA.

4. L.I.T. Courses in Ennis.

Cllr. Colleran Molloy referred to an email she had received regarding the ceasing of all L.I.T. courses in Ennis in lieu of Thurles.

Members agreed to write to the President of L.I.T. to enquire why Thurles was chosen over Ennis & to seek a reversal of this decision.

The meeting then concluded.