

Minutes of the Municipal District of Ennis Meeting held at 3.30pm on Tuesday April 7th, 2015, in the Council Chamber, Áras an Contae, Clare County Council, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare.

Present:

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

Officials: Ger Dollard, Director of Services, Gordon Daly, Senior Planner, Barry Conway Executive Engineer, Catherine O' Hara, Meetings Administrator & Fiona Whelan, Staff Officer.

Bus Éireann: Miriam Flynn & Tony O'Brien

Iarnród Éireann: Noreen Clohessy, Jim Galvin & Philip Conway

Item No. 1. Minutes of the March monthly meeting held on the 3rd of March, 2015.

It was proposed by Cllr. Mary Howard and seconded by Cllr. Ann Norton that the Minutes of the 3rd March 2015, monthly meeting, as circulated, be agreed and adopted.

Item No. 2 Minutes of Special Meeting of the Municipal District of Ennis held on the 23rd March 2015.

It was proposed by Cllr. Pat Daly and seconded by Cllr. Paul Murphy that the Minutes of the Special Meeting held on the 23rd of March, 2015, monthly meeting, as circulated, be agreed and adopted.

Item No. 3 Customer Service at Ennis Station – Reps from Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann.

Members welcomed the representatives from both organisations and said it was a great opportunity to have them in the Chamber to outline their concerns for the Station. Members feel that Ennis station is losing its personal touch. Members also had a number of other concerns in relation to buses and trains not complimenting each other and felt there was no joined up thinking between the two companies. There was also a concern in relation to disabled users of the station and the trains have to be shunted across to a different line to assist disabled users as there was no lift at the station.

Members also felt that the station needs to be manned to give a sense of security to passengers, especially the elderly and that the lack of sheltered seating on the platform was a concern for the elderly in particular.

Miriam Flynn reassured members of Bus Eireann's commitment to Ennis Station and hopes that the Station can be developed further in the future as Ennis is an important transport hub. Currently there are 100 bus movements daily at Ennis station. Services have already been developed to

facilitate users of the Wild Atlantic Way and other services such as the Cliffs of Moher are in place keeping in mind Shannon airport and passengers who are exploring County Clare as part of the Tourism industry.

In 2013 the travel centre at Ennis closed due to reduced subvention and the changing role of modern technology with regard to travel. There is now a huge emphasis on on-line services and smart phones facilities in conjunction with the National Transport Authority. Phones at Ennis Station have been diverted to Limerick and these cost reducing factors will help maintain and develop as many transport services as possible through the Station.

High tech CCTV has been installed at Ennis station to track all bus movements and services in Ennis. This CCTV should help alleviate any security issues that the public may have.

Punctuality targets need to be met in relation to travel timetables, however, where feasible buses will wait for trains. There will be supervision in Ennis at peak times. Addition services will be offered for Events in Ennis and also at peak travel times.

Noreen Clohessy of Iarnród Éireann assured the members that while capital funding has been curtailed that the service from Ennis to Limerick has not reduced. Ennis is a travel hub and there is a lot of business on the Ennis to Limerick line.

As there is no lift at the Station in Ennis at present once there is advance notice given of disabled passengers the train can be shunted across the line to facilitate passengers who are wheelchair bound. There are personnel on the platform for all rail services.

In relation to the rail time table, if a train is late it has a knock on effect for other train services.

Item No. 4 Draft Ennis and Environs Local Area Plan 2015-2021

G. Dollard informed the meeting that the Draft Plan under preparation to date has been very favourably commented on by the public and very well received in general. However, current legislation mechanisms do not accommodate the plan in its current preparation process.

Options set out in the Department's letter must terminate the preparation of the Ennis Local Area Plan and it must be incorporated into the County Development Plan process. An approach must be taken to comply with legislation.

G. Daly, Senior Planner, stated that there is a good strong plan in draft form and that the work so far is not in vain. Persons who have made submissions will be advised that the Local Area Plan process has ceased and that they will be contacted by the Council when a draft of the County Development Plan has been prepared and is issuing for public consultation. This will be in December of this year. The Council will write to all the 223 persons who had made submissions and communicate the issues as discussed. The issuing of these letters is imminent.

Members hoped that it would be the 8 members of the Municipal District of Ennis who would have the strongest input into the section of the County Development Plan which deals with the Ennis Municipal District area.

When the Draft County Development Plan is advertised there will be a new closing date for submissions. Submissions already received for the Ennis area can be handed back to the people who have already submitted them and they can be re-submitted and re-used if relevant. This will all be

explained to the 223 people involved and the position will be fully clarified. There will be further workshops and the County Development Plan must be adopted by the full Council. This process was proposed by Cllr. Pat Daly and seconded by Cllr. Johnny Flynn and agreed.

On the proposal of Cllr. Clare Colleran Molloy, seconded by Cllr. Ann Norton it was agreed having considered the report and recommendation of the Director of Service the members of Ennis MD hereby decide to cease the preparation of the Ennis & Environs Local Area Plan 2015-2021 and proceed to incorporate objectives relating to Ennis & Environs into the Draft Clare County Development Plan currently in the course of preparation.

Item No. 5. S 183 Disposal of Property – Property at No. 26 Gordon Drive, Ennis.

This item was proposed by Cllr. James Breen, seconded by Cllr. Ann Norton and agreed. The money from the sale of this property stays in the Housing pot.

Item No. 6 Community & Arts Grants 2015.

G. Dollard informed the meeting that a number of these applications had been dealt with at the last meeting and the following grants were now on the table as follows:

• Ref 10. Clarecastle Community Garden	€1,000.00
• Ref 17. Clarecastle Mens Shed Assoc	€1,000.00
• Ref 25. Clare Art Collective	nil
• Ref 26. David O'Rourke	nil
• Ref 27. David O'Rourke	nil
• Ref 28. David O'Rourke	nil
• Ref 29. Arts Festival/Ennis Fringe	€500.00

Ref 25 application had not made clear what the application entailed.

Ref(s) 26, 27 & 28 could be discussed with the Arts Officer and should be open to the public.

Cllr. Pat Daly wished for Ref No. 6 – Éire Óg GAA Community & Arts Grant application to be re-visited at a future date.

Cllr. James Breen left the meeting before the discussions on the Ennis Environs allocation was considered in relation to the Mike McTigue Community Centre Ltd. in Kilnamona, Co. Clare.

G. Dollard informed the meeting that he had visited the centre on request of the applicant and he was very impressed with the centre. Part of the community centre, which would not normally be used during the day, was converted into a crèche and it was now hoped to subdivide the centre with a cost of works of €3,500 which was to be allocated from the Ennis Environs allocation.

This item was proposed by Cllr. Tom McNamara, seconded by Cllr. Paul Murphy and agreed.

Cllr. James Breen re-entered the meeting.

Item No. 7 Notices of Motion

Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr J. Breen was seconded by Cllr. P. Daly

What plans are in place for the development of the Post Office Field?

Gordon Daly, Senior Planner, replied as follows:

The Post Office field is a significant natural open space asset located adjacent to the historic town centre in a broad meander of the River Fergus. The low-lying ground, extending to around 1.6ha, is a natural floodplain for the River Fergus, helping to naturally ease the effects of seasonal flooding for the town. Whilst strategically located in the town, access to the field is limited whilst the height of the river wall, constructed as part of flood relief works has partially restricted visual and functional links to it from the surrounding town centre. There are no current plans for the Post Office Field. However, as part of a future green infrastructure plan, the Council will, subject to available funds, seek to sensitively enhance the Post Office Field and particularly to improve access to it.

The Municipal District Office of Ennis Office is presently preparing drawings and tender documents to repair the stone retaining wall at Bank Place between the Post Office and the Rectory in conjunction with the OPW. The MD office is also currently assessing the appropriate means of maintaining the Post Office Field.

Members had a general discussion on the Post Office field and felt that something should be done to enhance its use.

Ger Dollard informed the meeting that there seems to be two views on the field:-

1. It should have been developed years ago
2. It's a sanctuary in the centre of the town and it is it's wildness that is its attraction.
The Local Area Plan can be used as a public process as how to proceed and can be used as a mechanism to decide whether to protect or develop the field.

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

That Clare County Council would write to Shannon Group to look at putting a programme in place to maintain the up keep of the roads in the Gort Road Industrial Estate. Especially the road behind Shiels Car Sales.

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

The Roads within the Gort Road Industrial Estate are in charge of Clare County Council and the middle road behind Microsemi and Shiels Car Sales is in need of additional drainage and resurfacing. The detail of the drainage works need to be confirmed, quotes will be sought for the surfacing works and funding sought for work to be completed this year.

The Council has undertaken significant infrastructural works in the Business Park in recent years and these works have been very favorably commented on by the businesses on the Park. Works were undertaken on the basis of ongoing discussions with representatives of businesses in the estate.

Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr J. Flynn was seconded by Cllr. M. Howard.

to ask what are the expected completion dates for the approved priority Ennis pedestrian crossings , such as the one at Tesco/Aldi.

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

The Municipal District Office is awaiting response from Tesco to the final draft layout of the pedestrian crossing at Francis Street. This includes requirements for a set down area at the bottle bank requested by the MD Councillors. The public consultation will proceed following the response from Tesco and the tender documents will be prepared concurrently so as the tender process can proceed once the public consultation is completed. I expect that the construction of this pedestrian crossing will commence in August/September this year.

There is no funding available for any other pedestrian crossings this year and the present priority after Francis Street is the Carmody Street Crossing at Drumbiggle Road. There are draft drawings prepared for pedestrian crossings on the Gort Road at Ashfield Park, Clare Road at St Flannans College and Clonroadbeg at Eire Og.

Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr T. Mc Namara was seconded by Cllr. J. Breen.

I call on Clare County Council to carry out road widening work at the Corofin side of the R476 at Toonagh.

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

There are no proposals at present for upgrading of the R476 at Toonagh as funding is not available under the Specific Improvement Scheme for such works at present. Specific Improvement Scheme funding is being prioritised for bridge rehabilitation works at present. The Council will examine the section of road and consider any improvements in signage that may assist drivers at this location.

Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr M. Howard was seconded by Cllr. P. Murphy.

As a matter of urgency I request that EMD assess damage done to the Monument of Daniel O’Connell and provide for it’s restoration and protection.

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

The Municipal District Office is arranging an inspection of the Daniel O’Connell Sculpture on the Monument with the Council’s Conservation Officer.

A report and recommendations of this inspection will be forwarded to the Councillors.

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

I am requesting that strengthening and Road improvement works are carried out on the L-8286 road in Raheen/Leckaun, particularly at the forestry entrance near the Mescall dwelling.

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

The L-8286 at Cloongowna adjacent to the L42062 Reskaun to Kilmaley Road is included in the restoration improvement works in this year’s road works programme.

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

That Ennis Municipal District provide a list of the individual unfinished estates in the District with attributable LPT indicated for each unfinished estate listed.

Bernadette Haugh, Administrative Officer, replied as follows:

Clare Co. Council is not responsible for the administration of the Local Property Tax and consequently would not have such information available.

In the last update to the Department in October 2014, of the 21 remaining developments in County Clare which were classified as “unfinished estates” in the DECLG survey, 6 residential developments are located in the Ennis Municipal District, none of which are exempt from the Local Property Tax as follows:

1. Sli an Fheargais, Clarecastle
2. Acha Bhille, Lahinch Road, Ennis
3. Aisling, Shanaway Road, Ennis
4. Derrymore, Tulla Road, Ennis
5. Riverside Court, Clonroadmore, Ennis
6. Westwood, Golf Links, Ennis

There was a further discussion on this motion, G. Dollard informed the meeting that the Council do not have any information in relation to the Local Property Tax as it is a function of the Dept. of Revenue. The cost of unfinished estates in Co. Clare could be anywhere between €7m and €14m. It was then agreed on the proposal of Cllr. Clare Colleran Molloy, seconded by Cllr Tom McNamara that following discussion of a similar notice of motion at the full County Council level, a letter would issue to the Revenue Commissioners seeking information with regard to LPT and unfinished estates for the County which would include the Municipal District of Ennis.

It was further proposed by Cllr. Tom McNamara and seconded by Cllr. Johnny Flynn that the Council should write to the Minister for the Environment to request that the LPT collected in County Clare be put back into the County in order for the Council to take these estates in charge.

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

How many traveller accommodation units in the Ennis MD have full insurance cover?

Leonard Cleary, SEO, replied as follows:

The Group housing schemes at Ballaghboy, Ballymaley, Kildysart Road, Knockanean, and Watery Road have full insurance cover, in total 28 units.

The schemes at Ashline (unoccupied), and Beechpark are covered with the exception of loss or damage caused by fire that is malicious in origin.

Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr J. Flynn was seconded by Cllr. M. Howard.

That Clare County Council finish the footpath surfacing and lighting standards upgrading at Tim Smythe Park in order to improve the amenity and levels of safety for walkers, runners and other park users.

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

Ennis Town Council had proposals for a significant upgrade of Tim Smythe Park including playgrounds, walkways, public lighting, dressing rooms and an outdoor performance area. These works had to be curtailed-reduced due to the economic downturn. The playgrounds,

cctv and some elements of the walkways and public lighting were completed. The original proposed works included public lighting and resurfacing of the complete perimeter walkways. The public lighting along Lifford Road to the east of the park have double lamps to provide a level of public lighting along the perimeter walkway and ducting is in place along the perimeter walkway along Steeles Terrace for the provision of public lighting. If a funding stream was available for further work at Tim Smythe Park the Municipal District Office would prepare proposals for works based on the original proposed upgrade that was curtailed due to financial reasons.

It was also noted by members that access to Tim Smythe Park was not wheelchair user friendly and that disabled parking bays were also lacking in this area.

Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr A. Norton was seconded by Cllr. M. Howard.

Prior to this council making any modifications or changes to access equipment for users with disabilities at any of Clare Co Co facilities, that a period of consultation with users and disability groups such as the Irish Wheelchair Association, Brothers of Charity is completed to ascertain needs and suitability, as facilities such as Ennis swimming pool are essential for treatment and exercise programs for disability users.

Tim Forde, General Manager, Active Ennis Sports & Leisure Facilities, replied as follows:-

In reply to this notice of motion, it is important to mention at the outset, that Active Ennis Leisure Complex holds the 'GOLD STANDARD' award for Disability Awareness, from Ireland Active & the 'White Flag for Excellence in Leisure' bodies.

The piece of equipment being referred to, in this instance, is the poolside disabled users hoist. The previous hoist had been in place since 2001 and had over this period been well used.

The hydraulics failed on the unit and there was significant damage to the chair and frame, as some of the users were of proportions in excess of the load specifications. It was also the case that the process for use of this particular unit required 2 or more operators in order to place the disabled person safely, into and out of, the pool. The unit was awkward and difficult to manoeuvre, and did not allow the disabled person any level of independence.

As mentioned, there was a catastrophic failure of the unit and the cost of repair and/or replacement was price prohibitive as we had no provision in our budget for the item, and resources are very scarce in the present climate.

As we did not want to leave our community of users without access to the pool, and based on the fact that we are constantly in informal consultation with these persons and their organization. We contacted our sources in the industry, who understand the needs of disabled users, and proceeded to purchase the 'best in practice' unit for the users in AELC.

The unit we installed is compact, more robust and functional, requires very little maintenance, is operated by water pressure, and permits the user to operate it independently should they wish. It also only requires assistance from a carer if the user finds its operation to challenging.

That said, once installed and returned to full use, we received feedback from the users that some individuals, particularly those with upper body restrictions, were finding it a little more difficult to operate and feel confident with its use.

We took note of their concerns and re-engaged with the supplier and manufacturer, to see if we could find a solution. We are in discussions with them and we believe that we have found a solution, which we are awaiting delivery of presently. We have also decided to re-locate the hoist unit to an area closer to the shallower end of the pool to aid the carer in maintaining their balance while assisting the user.

Please be assured that Active Ennis Sports & Leisure Facilities are dedicated to meeting the needs and providing suitable means for all our users to access the facilities for essential treatments, exercise programs and casual usage.

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

In the interest of road safety I call on Clare County Council to put in place a right turning lane and no overtaking signs on the R352 at the Tulla Side of Hennessy's Cross.

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

The Council will carry out a review of data at this location and see if it will meet the criteria for consideration as a Low Cost Safety Scheme as set out by the Department of Transport. The Municipal District Office will examine the approach signs at this junction and consider any improvements in signage that may assist drivers at this location.

Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr P. Murphy was seconded by Cllr. P. Daly.

In the interest of road traffic and pedestrian safety, I am requesting that the parking of school buses adjacent to St. Flannan's College entrance is reviewed as a matter of urgency and that speed calming is considered from the Clare road roundabout through to the Eire Og grounds.

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

The Municipal District Office will examine the location and see what (if any) short to medium term measures can be put in place to deal with the peak pedestrian-traffic movements adjacent to the school bus location on St Flannan's Drive. Any more significant work in regard to school bus facilities would require consultation with the St Flannans College Board of Management as it may require adjustment to the present school entrance. The Municipal District Office will carry out traffic speed surveys on this road to evaluate whether traffic calming is required on the Regional Road.

Any Other Business

The letter from the National Museum of Ireland was acknowledged by members and had been forwarded to John Rattigan, Museum Curator, for his advice.

The meeting then concluded.