

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Municipal District of Ennis held at 2pm in Áras an Contae, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare, on Tuesday the 23rd March 2015.

Present:

Councillors: J. Flynn, T. McNamara, A. Norton, C. Colleran Molloy, J. Breen, M. Howard, P. Murphy & P. Daly.

Officials: Ger Dollard, Tom Tiernan, Eamon O’Dea, Catherine O’Hara & Fiona Whelan

Cllr. J. Flynn, Mayor of Ennis, chaired the meeting.

Cllr. Flynn welcomed members to the Special Meeting which was being held mainly to adopt the Schedule of Municipal Works for the Ennis Municipal District area for 2015.

Item No. 1 – Schedule of Municipal Works – Ennis 2015.

G. Dollard informed the meeting that this was a new function for the Municipal Districts and it was due to the recent reform of Local Government. All four Municipal Districts must hold meetings to adopt the Schedule and while the 31st of March is not a statutory deadline it was recommended as a reasonable deadline for their adoption. Once adopted the Schedule cannot be changed or amended and it will only go to the full Council if one or more of the Municipal Districts do not adopt their Schedule of Works.

G. Dollard reminded the meeting that the County Council has already adopted their annual budget for 2015, therefore, if there were to be changes it would have to be between the individual Municipal Districts.

Tom Tiernan, Senior Engineer, outlined what was involved in the Schedule of Municipal Works for 2015. The overall structure of the report itself outlines the full Schedule of Works for the County with each individual Municipal District outlined in a separate Appendix.

Generally from a road works point of view it appeared that there is an increase of 6.9%, however, when looked at more closely it actually results in a decrease of approximately 3% to the budget for roads for 2015. Current indications are that there will not be a Supplementary Community Scheme which had enhanced the figures in the past. 5% has been taken from the Restoration Improvement Grant to supplement CIS.

The Block Grant of €450,000 which the former Ennis Town Council received does not now exist, however, other grants have been expanded to cover approx €400,000 of this amount.

Eamon O’Dea stated that in relation to the 2015 Discretionary Grants there was €534,000 in the budget and that €302,500 of this would be for the town of Ennis with the balance going to the remainder of the District.

Members acknowledged Clare County Council and the executive with regard to works done to date. It was also acknowledged that various problems due to climate change over the last 5 years had swallowed up a lot of resources that were available in the past.

Members also agreed that Ennis town needs to be upgraded especially before the Fleadh 2016. The volume of traffic in the Ennis town area is far greater than other areas of the County and funding should be made available. Ennis, as the County's Capital town and a hub town in the National Spatial Strategy, needs investment. Members suggested that the block grant should be re-introduced and that the Municipal District of Ennis should look for €1m additional funding for specific projects such as the Ballybeg Road, Oakleigh Woods Roundabout and Gort Road Industrial Estate Roundabout.

Members suggested that we write to the Minister for Arts with an application for funding to assist in the hosting of the Fleadh 2016, however, G. Dollard pointed out that an allocation is normally given from the Department of Tourism to the organising Committee for the Fleadh.

It was noted that the appointment of consultants has been initiated by the NRA in relation to improvements to the N85 so progress can be expected in relation to this route.

Tom Tiernan informed members that roundabouts are very difficult to allocate money towards as the cost is very high and the money simply isn't there. The focus he added is about maintaining what we already have.

It was noted that currently there is no prospect of the Ballybeg road being done this year. ESB poles had been moved back on this road following a safety issue which had been highlighted at a previous meeting of the Municipal District of Ennis.

Paving will be done at various locations around Ennis and re-surfacing will be done in other areas including from O'Connell Square to the Market Street area of O'Connell Street. The pedestrian crossing at Tesco will progress shortly to the Part VIII and public consultation.

It was proposed by Cllr. J. Flynn & seconded by Cllr. T. McNamara that we write to the Minister for the Environment to seek extra funding for the various works around Ennis.

Members complimented works done to date under the Housing Programme and in particular the various grant schemes that were available through Housing.

Members queried the spend difference between overall social housing and that of traveller accommodation. G. Dollard acknowledged that this was the case due to the nature of the accommodation as well as the fact that other support services needed to be factored in such as water treatment facilities etc. Insurance was also raised as an issue in relation to traveller accommodation. Members queried if Garda vetting was being carried out on applicants for housing. G. Dollard is to check this matter further.

It was agreed that funding is also an issue in the area of the various types of Housing grants which is particularly noticeable to the most vulnerable in our society, especially with the various disability schemes and mobility grants.

The issue of property tax was discussed as to whether it was being spent in the County. Ger Dollard informed the meeting that property tax was not part of the budget for the County. It was agreed that property tax is a debate for the full Council and should be discussed at a full Council meeting. G.

Dollard informed the meeting that property tax is decided at a central Government level and it is a decision for the Government how the money is spent.

On the proposal of Cllr Clare Colleran Molly, seconded by Cllr Tom MC Namara, it was agreed unanimously, to accept the Schedule of Municipal Works 2015.

Item No. 2 CEDRA Report : Consideration of draft Submission

On the proposal of Cllr J Flynn, seconded by Cllr J Breen it was agreed unanimously, to accept the draft submission by Clare Co Council to the CEDRA report as presented with the following amendments.

The following projects are to be included in relation to the Municipal District of Ennis in the final submission

1. The development of Quinn Abbey as a tourism attraction / interpretation centre
2. The development of an Urban Heritage Visitor Attraction in Ennis in conjunction with Shannon Heritage

Item No. 3. Extinguishment of Right of Way at Castlelawn.

This matter was deferred.

The Meeting then concluded.