

2nd February, 2009

TO ALL MEMBERS OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL
--

The Adjourned November Meeting of Donegal County Council, will be held on Monday 9th February, 2009 at 10.00am, in the County House, Lifford.

Questions and Motions

Items 13 and 14

Items 16 and 17

Items 19 – 25

Items 27 – 61

Please ensure that you bring the agenda previously distributed to the meeting.

Eunan Sweeney

Meetings Administrator

MINUTES OF ADJOURNED MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY
COUNCIL, HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON 9th
FEBRUARY 2009

C/50/09 MEMBERS PRESENT

Clrs. G. Crawford, Mayor, D. Alcorn, L. Blaney, A. Bonner, E. Bonner, J. Boyle, C. Brogan, B. Byrne, F. Conaghan, P. Doherty, R. Donaghey, M.T. Gallagher, C. Harvey, J. Kelly, D. Larkin, N. Mc Bride, M. Mc Donald, I. McGarvey, D. Mc Gonagle, P. Mc Gowan, B. Mc Guinness, B. O' Neill, G. Reid, T. Slowey

C/51/09 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Clr. Mc Eniff who was unable to attend the meeting.

C/52/09 OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Michael McLoone, County Manager, Mr. Liam Kelly, Assistant County Manager, Director of Housing, Mr. Francie Coyle, Director of Planning and Economic Development, Mr. Sean Sheridan, Director Corporate Services, Mr. John Mc Laughlin, Director Roads and Transportation, Mr. Aidan Mc Nicholas, Head of Finance, Mr. Michael Heaney, Director Community Culture and Enterprise, Mr. Seamus Neely, Director Water, Environment and Emergency Services, Mr. Brian Boyle, Head of Information Systems, Mr. Liam Ward, Senior Executive Officer, Ms Helena O' Toole, Senior Planner, Mr. Gary Martin, Senior Executive Officer, Mr. Charles Sweeney, Administrative Officer, Mr. Eunan Sweeney, Meetings Administrator, Ms. Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

C/53/09 MAYOR'S BUSINESS (Continued)

FREEDOM OF THE COUNTY-RESOLUTION UNDER SECTION 74 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001

The Mayor outlined the enormous contribution made by all of those who served in the Defence Forces in Donegal with special recognition for those who served in the Garrisons at Lifford and Rockhill. On the proposal of Clr. Crawford, seconded by Clr. Larkin, it was resolved pursuant to Section 74 of the Local Government Act 2001 to award the Freedom

of the County to the 28th Infantry Battalion in honour of their longstanding service to the county.

Letter of Congratulations

On the proposal of Clr. Larkin, seconded by Clr. Mc Garvey, it was resolved to send a letter of congratulations to Shay Given wishing him well on his recent transfer to Manchester City.

C/54/09

PROVISION OF AN OUTREACH CENTRE TO SOUTH INISHOWEN

On the proposal of Clr. Conaghan, seconded by Clr. McGonagle, the following motion was adopted:-

"That Donegal County Council provides an outreach service to South Inishowen now that Manorcunningham is to be included in the Inishowen Electoral Area."

Members were informed that:-

"It is proposed to provide outreach County Council services from the Buncrana Town Council offices shortly. This will consist of providing information and application forms on Council services and a facility to enable applicants for services to get an update in relation to an application which they have lodged in the Carndonagh office.

It should be noted also that the full range of Council services is available from any of the PSC's and the Letterkenny PSC in particular may be convenient for customers from South Inishowen who wish to avail of these services. In addition, many of the services are now accessible on line-Motor Tax, Planning, Register of Electors and proposals to expand on these are under consideration in order to make access more convenient for citizens."

Clr. Conaghan outlined the need to provide general information and a range of appropriate application forms at such centres.

It was agreed that the matter would be considered as part of the ongoing review of Electoral Areas.

C/55/09

EMPLOYMENT OF ROADS STAFF IN THE
CLONMANY AREA

On the proposal of Clr. McGonagle, seconded by Clr. Conaghan, the following motion was adopted:-

"That the few men employed by Donegal County Council in the Roads Service in the Clonmany area be kept more often in the area than moved to outside areas."

Members were informed that:-

“Council Roads staff based in the Buncrana/Clonmany Roads Supervisor’s Area are assigned to maintenance works within that area, as well as working on specific projects such as Surfacing, Restoration, Development Charge Schemes or Low Cost Accident Schemes. The maintenance budgets are allocated to the Supervisor's Area and Roads Operatives spend their time on necessary maintenance within the Clonmany/Buncrana area as budgets allow. This budget is spent solely within the Supervisors Area and the Clonmany Area receives a similar proportion of this time/budget as other parts of the Supervisor's Area, while other works such as restoration and surface dressing programmes are agreed with the Local Members on an annual or multi annual basis.”

It was acknowledged that every effort should be made to retain the staffing complement particularly in relation to ongoing road maintenance.

Members requested that contact details for Roads Staff, particularly those involved with winter maintenance, be updated and forwarded by e-mail to all members.

The Director of Service agreed to write to all staff involved on winter maintenance thanking them for their excellent work over the past few weeks. He also agreed to liaise with Mr Vincent Lynn, Senior Engineer in relation to the number of personnel on duty at any one time.

C/56/09

RESTRICTIVE PRACTICE PROPOSED FOR SITE ASSESSMENTS

The following motion was submitted by Clr. Brogan:-

"That this council investigate and report back in full to a council meeting on the restrictive practice proposed for site assessments and that this Council confirms that it will accept reports with planning applications from qualified people as this was never approved by Donegal County Council."

Members were informed that:-

“The purpose of the Panel approach is to set standards of competency to be attained by anyone engaging in this work. It is particularly relevant in the case of Site Suitability Assessments because the legislation is framed to require submission of “information on the on-site treatment system proposed and evidence as to the suitability of the site for the system proposed”. As a consequence there is a specific technical expertise required to obtain and present evidence to defined standards (as laid out by the EPA).

The operation of a Panel has a number of benefits which merit repeating since, among other things, they assist the public:

1. Use of the Panel guarantees that applicants will be engaging someone who can demonstrate they have sufficient knowledge of the issues and methodology to deliver an assessment that is fit for purpose. The Assessor is also covered by public liability insurance. Taken together, these should ensure a satisfactory end development which is to the benefit of the applicant.
2. It ensures that proper regard is had to the issues of importance and (as required by EPA guidance) proper consideration is made of the Local Environmental context in addition to the specific site. This is to the benefit of the environment and ultimately protects against the potential cost of fines from Europe arising from pollution.

It should be noted that this improvement in the way the Council does business is consistent with the adopted Budget

for 2009. Therein the strategic aims of the Corporate Plan include an aim “to maintain and continuously improve our existing services and assets” and an aim “to modernise our systems for delivering an improved quality of service to customers in efficient and cost effective ways...”. The introduction of the select panel was considered and approved by the Corporate Policy Group following two meetings in 2008. The Budget Report (adopted by the Council on 9th January 2009) sets out both the rationale and the intention to operate the Panel of Assessors in 2009.

The proposal to operate a Select Panel for Site Suitability Assessors was the subject of press advertisement and open application and was widely flagged on the Council’s website. In addition, the Panel is not operated on the basis of a “once and for all time” opportunity to be included but will be open to annual review. At this review, provision is made for the addition of suitably qualified and competent people who will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their capability at interview. Such a process of review and addition is similar to other cases of select lists commonly used within Councils. In Planning, for example, the list of approved newspapers is reviewed annually.

The Planning Directorate has not sought to impose any arbitrary limitation on the numbers of individuals included on the panel and all those who applied (43) were invited to interview. Three chose not to attend. Demonstration of ability was the principal yardstick and thereafter, the individuals meet other criteria such as public liability insurance. While the list already published contains 25 names, a number of others have been deemed suitable for inclusion subject to completion of some procedures. This is likely to result in circa 30 individuals operating in the County in 2009. The operation of a Panel also addresses concerns which had been raised with the Council about the implications of unqualified and uninsured individuals providing a “service” without sufficient security in terms of either technical or financial support should the completed assessment fail adequately to reflect the site conditions thus rendering a development uninhabitable at worst or habitable only after considerable cost for remedial action.

In view of both the expansive approach to invite and interview and the review facility, the process could not be considered as restrictive practice. The Planning Directorate also confirms that it is proposed to review the operation of the Panel approach at the end of the first year of operation.”

Clr. Brogan agreed not to proceed with the motion and to await the presentation of a comprehensive report to the full Council.

C/57/09

PROCEDURES USED IN THE CHANGE OF THE SOURCE OF WATER IN LETTERKENNY

On the proposal of Clr. Larkin, seconded by Clr. Brogan, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this council furnish the Chamber with a full mineral analyses and procedures been used in the change of source of water in Letterkenny, especially focusing on the Bomany and New Mills areas."

Members were informed that:-

“The water supply to the Bomany and New Mills areas of Letterkenny is a mixed supply from the new Letterkenny boreholes and the upland lake sources L Salt / L Keel / L Greenan. The population of Letterkenny has for years been supplied from upland lake sources only. The development of groundwater sources in 2008 has introduced a harder water into the supply. It is to be expected that consumers will notice, and remark upon the change, initially. Blending water from the two sources, as is being done, minimises this change. We can expect that consumers will adapt to the new supply over time. The water supplied is tested at source and at consumers’ taps in accordance with the requirements of the Drinking Water Regulations, and is found to comply with those requirements.”

It was agreed that consideration should be given to amending the blend in the water to a 50/50 spread of ground and lake water.

Members highlighted the need to conduct a publicity campaign so as to allay the fears of the general public in relation to water quality in the Letterkenny area.

They queried the possibility of using specialist equipment to lessen the effects of hardness in the water.

C/58/09

PROVISION OF SOCIAL HOUSING IN LETTERKENNY

On the proposal of Clr. O'Neill, seconded by Clr. Boyle, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this Council address the requirement for the urgent provision of Social Housing in Ballyshannon."

Members were informed that:-

“Ballyshannon currently has the second highest housing need in the Donegal Electoral Area, with a first preference need of 74 applicants. It is to be noted that 51% of the applicants are single adults with no dependents while a further 23% are single adults with one child. Such demographics pose a challenge in itself in the provision of an appropriate housing mix in a scheme to meet this need. The Council have made strenuous efforts in the last year to acquire a suitable landbank in Ballyshannon but to date has not been successful. With the current slowdown in the construction sector it is expected that more opportunities will arise in the market and it is a priority for the Housing Design and Construction section to target the acquisition of a suitable landbank in the first half of 2009 and to follow on with the process of providing a scheme on same immediately after. It should be noted however that the acquisition of a site as well as the provision of the scheme are both subject to the approval of the Department. In the current economic climate the Department are exploring additional mechanisms for providing social housing including the increased level of acquisition of existing and partly finished houses and long term leasing (up to 20 years) of existing housing, and it will be in this light that any approvals sought from the Dept. for land acquisition or provision of social housing schemes will be judged.”

It was agreed that the Housing Directorate should meet with the Ballyshannon and Bundoran Town Council members together with the members of the Donegal Electoral Area to examine the need for Social Housing in the region. Members also requested that a report on the matter be brought to the Council pending a review by the Housing SPC of the current Donegal County Council Housing Policy.

C/59/09

REQUEST TO REVIEW THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF WATER RATES

On the proposal of Clr. McGarvey, seconded by Clr. McBride, the following motion was adopted:-

"That Donegal Co. Co. review the present system of water rates on Community Halls, Church Halls and all such facilities that are being run on a voluntary or semi voluntary basis."

Members were informed that:-

“The practice and charges used by Donegal Co Co with respect to the use by voluntary bodies of water services was previously the subject of correspondence between the Council and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, (at the behest of the Water, Environment & Emergency SPC). The outcome of said correspondence was that as non-domestic consumers voluntary bodies are liable to the normal charging system in place. Where particular and exceptional issues arise with a specific voluntary body consumer in respect of a specific water bill this can be pursued with the relevant staff at the local Public Service Centre.”

Members asked that every effort be made to review the present system of charges.

C/60/09

PROMOTION OF TURN-KEY HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

On the proposal of Clr. McBride, seconded by Clr. McGarvey, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this Council promote Turn-key Housing Developments which in turn will help create much needed employment in our county."

Members were informed that:-

“Over the last ten years Donegal County Council has delivered a significant proportion of its social housing programme through Turnkey Contracts. Indeed the Council was at the vanguard of this method of housing delivery nationally. At present the Housing Design/Construction section are developing a number of turnkey projects on foot of the last round of turnkey proposals submitted following a public procurement process and the further progression of these projects will be subject to the approval of the Dept.. The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government are presently exploring additional methods of providing social housing given the current economic climate and these options include the increased level of acquisition of existing finished and unfinished housing and long term leasing (up to 20 years) of existing houses. It is likely therefore that the turnkey option for the provision of social housing in areas where the greatest housing need exists will be one of a suite of such options to be considered in the light of available funding and which will of course be subject to approval from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. It is understood that final confirmations of capital allocations for housing for 2009 and beyond are being considered by the Department at this time.”

It was acknowledged that there was a need to support both the local indigenous population and the local building trade.

Members asked that housing waiting lists be examined with a view to formulating specific policies for various categories of applicant.

The need to promote other Housing Policies such as Rent to Buy Schemes, Home Choice Schemes, together with the provision of Council assisted mortgages etc was noted.

Members queried if there had been any feedback from the Minister for the Environment in relation to the adoption of the “Local Builders Policy”.

Mr Francie Coyle, Director of Planning and Economic Development noted that the Minister’s Office had referred the matter to the Attorney General’s Office to test the legality of the decision under a number of sections of EU Law.

Clr. Conaghan proposed, seconded by Clr. Slowey and it was resolved that the Council proceed with the Local Builders Policy, as included in Variation No. 8 of the County Development Plan 2006-2012.

C/61/09

NAMING OF RAMELTON RECREATION AND AMENITY AREA PROJECT

Clr. Blaney proposed, seconded by Clr. Kelly,

“That this Council officially name the Ramelton Recreation and Amenity Area Project as The Dave Gallaher Park”

Members were informed that: -

“Donegal County Council and Strabane District Council have developed the Heritage, Environment, Art and Rural Tourism (HEART) project with a view towards promoting sustainable development of towns and villages in Donegal and in the Strabane district.

Seven towns were chosen by the elected members of Donegal County Council to participate in this programme, these included the five designated heritage towns, (Ramelton, Moville, Raphoe, Ardara, and Ballyshannon), Lifford as the County town and Ballybofey/Stranorlar from the Stranorlar Electoral Area. Donegal County Council has designated five heritage towns in the County and is seeking, on an ongoing basis, through various initiatives such as HEART, opportunities to promote economic, social and cultural development in these towns.

The two Council’s were successful in a bid for Interreg IIIA funding from the Department of Agriculture and Rural

Development in Northern Ireland and the International Fund for Ireland.

It is in this context that the Ramelton Recreation and Amenity project has developed. The project is based on the utilisation of existing Council owned land, which has been developed as a public amenity using HEART (EU Interreg and IFI funding) and Donegal County Council resources.

This project consists of environmental improvements, the installation of six major stone artworks depicting the history of Ramelton and the provision of a new toilet block. The work has been carried out by Donegal County Council, working in close co-operation with the community of Ramelton. This partnership approach has resulted in an attractive and useful project for the benefit of the local community and visitors alike.

The total project cost for the Ramelton Recreation and Amenity Area, excluding site costs was €225,000 funded as follows

Interreg III A	€ 140,000
International Fund for Ireland	€ 30,000
Donegal County Council	€ 55,000

During the consultation phase of the project it emerged that the Dave Gallagher Society had drawn up a plan, which was agreed, as part of the review process by the Project Steering group, could be utilised within the context of the overall project.

The members of the Milford Electoral Area Committee, at their meeting of 9th September, proposed to seek public submissions from interested parties for a suitable name for the Recreation and Amenity Area taking into consideration the Donegal Placenames Policy.

Following a public advertisement submissions were received for the following proposed names:

- The Dave Gallaher Park
- Memorial Garden
- Remembrance Garden

- The Ramelton Memorial Park / Páirc Chuimhneacháin Rath Mealtain

The Placenames Committee of Donegal County Council were requested to give observations on the issue at their meeting on the 16th October 2008 to assist in informing the Milford Electoral Area in forming their recommendation to bring before the full Council for adoption.

The Placenames Committee offered the following observations:

- Submissions had been received recommending that the park be dedicated to the memory of individuals from Ramelton who excelled in their chosen fields during their lifetime, only two individuals were mentioned, in the submissions, Dave Gallaher and Patsy Gallagher, the members mentioned others who might be worthy of consideration including Catherine Black and Frances Makemie.
- It was noted that there were submissions revolving around acknowledging sportsmen whose surname was Gallagher or Gallaher. Páirc Uí Ghallchóir was suggested as a compromise.
- The members noted that the artwork included within the park referred to the history of Ramelton as a whole and queried whether the name of the park should identify with only one person.
- The role in conceiving the concept by the Dave Gallaher Society was noted and a member queried whether their submission should carry additional weight.
- A suggestion was made, and many members concurred, that the park should be named in a general manner, with a plaque of some type that would allow recognition to be paid to a wide array of individuals.

The members of the Milford Electoral Area Committee have discussed the matter at their meeting on the 13th November,

but have not as yet made a recommendation on the name of the Public recreation and Amenity Area that has been developed in Ramelton.”

Clr Mc Bride queried the legality of the motion and whether or not it could be dealt with in the present forum.

Mr. Gary Martin, S.E.O. outlined the chronology of events and advised that, ideally the naming of the park should be dealt with at local area level.

The County Manager advised that failure to reach agreement would result in the project being named in a general manner with the names of all associated individuals recorded on a dedicated plaque. Opinion available seemed to indicate that it was an executive function.

The preferred option, he noted, was to have consensus on a name. It was acknowledged that the matter had created considerable division within the local community.

The Mayor informed the meeting that failure to reach agreement would result in the matter falling to the Executive to decide.

Clr. Blaney said that he had introduced the motion because of the clear lack of consensus at Electoral Area level and that the park in question would not have been progressed without the help of the Dave Gallaher Society.

An Amendment was proposed by Clr. Mc Bride, seconded by Clr. O’ Neill “To defer a decision for six months and if consensus cannot be reached within the six months that it be left to the Executive to name.”

Mr. Eunan Sweeney, Meetings Administrator advised that in accordance with Standing Orders a vote would be taken firstly in relation to the amendment. In response to Clr. Blaney’s query, he advised that the amendment did not constitute a direct negative.

A recorded vote taken by the Meetings Administrator resulted in 11 voting for with 11 against.

Those voting in favour were: -

Clrs Boyle, Brogan, Doherty, Gallagher, Harvey, Mc Bride, Mc Garvey, Mc Guinness, O' Neill, Reid, and Slowey. (11)

Those voting against were: -

Clrs Alcorn, Brogan, A. Bonner, E. Bonner, Byrne, Conaghan, Donaghey, Kelly , Mc Donald, Mc Gonagle and Mc Gowan. (11)

This resulted in an equality of votes with the Mayor confirming that he would not be exercising his casting vote. In accordance with Standing Order 55, the amendment was deemed not carried and the motion adjourned to the next ordinary meeting of the council.

C/62/09

ERECTION OF TRAFFIC LIGHTS AT MC CLAYS CORNER – REVIEW OF ROAD SIGNAGE IN BALLYBOFEY/STRANORLAR

Clr. Reid proposed, seconded by Clr. Boyle,

“That this Council erect Traffic Lights At Mc Clays Corner and that this Council will undertake a review of road signage in the Towns of Ballybofey and Stranorlar”

Members were informed that: -

“The junction in question is a National Road Junction linking Stranorlar with Letterkenny, Lifford and Donegal Town. Road Design agree that the traffic arrangements at the junction and beyond require appraisal. Road Design/ NRDO can undertake this appraisal and recommend the most efficient option for funding consideration. That option can then be designed, costed and, subject to funding, be implemented.

Subject to the Council approval of this course of action and agreement on prioritisation of Road Design's workload and funding, the appraisal (including preliminary costings) could be complete by June 09.”

Members welcomed the reply but noted that a similar type proposal had been considered previously and proved unviable.

It was acknowledged that there was a need for some form of traffic management system.

After a protracted debate Clr. Reid agreed to a proposal from Clr. A. Bonner to amend his motion as follows: -

“ That the NRDO and the Road Design Section of Donegal County Council initiate an appraisal of the traffic arrangements at Mc Clay’s Corner in Stranorlar and recommend the most efficient option for funding consideration”

The Motion, as amended, was seconded by Clr. Slowey and adopted.

It was agreed that the matter would revert to the Council as soon as the appraisal was completed.

C/63/09

AVAILABILITY OF BROADBAND IN DONEGAL

On the proposal of Clr. Slowey, seconded by Clr. McGuinness, the following motion was adopted:-

"That this County Council discuss the availability of Broadband in Donegal and the contribution of this Local Authority to its provision."

Members were informed that: -

“Members will recall that a comprehensive report on the status of Broadband and Telecommunications facilities in the County was presented to Council at the Capital Programme Budget meeting held on December 4th. An updated version of the report has been posted to the Member’s extranet.

In Ireland, telecommunications services are provided by private sector operators regulated by a Government appointed independent regulator. Whilst not a direct responsibility of Local Government, Donegal County Council for the last decade has worked progressively to assist the creation of a competitive telecommunications market in the County. The difficulties faced by the Donegal economy are well documented. It is widely recognised that advanced telecommunications services can give the county a

competitive advantage in terms of attracting inward investment and assisting economic development.

The Council has played an important role in a number of areas:

The provision of alternative independent fibre backbone connections to the County (ESBT network extension 2001).

Planning and construction of 7 Metropolitan Area Networks in the County in the period 2003 – 2008. The MAN towns are Bundoran, Ballyshannon, Donegal Town, Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Letterkenny, Buncrana and Carndonagh.

Financially assisting the community based CNS project in the provision of a countywide wireless broadband service aimed at serving rural areas of the county. This project is on going.

Working with the Department of Communications Marine & Natural Resources on broadband policy development. The Council have issued a formal response to the Minister's consultation paper on Next Generation Broadband outlining in particular the necessity to ensure that rural areas are not disadvantaged as broadband services and speeds develop.

A very significant announcement was recently made as regards international connectivity. Project Kelvin is a €30m project to directly connect the north west of Ireland with North America and the UK. The project includes links into Donegal. The Council has commenced work with Hibernia Atlantic on the planning of the Donegal connections.

Private operators have also made substantial progress in relation to broadband provision. Eircom has enabled 47 exchanges to date with a further 12 planned for 2009. Mobile broadband providers Vodafone, O2 and 3 provide substantial coverage in the county. In addition several other wireless and satellite companies are providing services in various areas.”

It was acknowledged that the availability of broadband was essential if Donegal was to attract jobs and investment over the coming months.

Members asked that Eircom be contacted in relation to the inclusion of the five remaining exchanges in the county.

Concern was expressed in relation to the slowing up of the CNS Project.

It was agreed that the Head of Information Systems would follow up on the lack of broadband provision in the Carndonagh area.

C/64/09

REGISTER OF ELECTORS AND THE PRINTING OF NAMES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

On the proposal of Clr. Alcorn, seconded by Clr. Doherty, the following motion was adopted:-

"That Donegal Co. Co. discuss the Voting Register of Electors, with a view of having all names printed in alphabetical order."

Members were informed that: -

“The Council, as registration authority, compiles the Register of Electors in accordance with the Guidance Memorandum for Preparing & Maintaining the Register of Electors issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Electors are listed in alphabetical order within each townland/street or by house number where these exist. Electors are entitled to be registered in English or Irish.”

Acknowledging members concerns Mr Eunan Sweeney, Meetings Administrator agreed that there was a need to fundamentally change the manner in which the Voting Register was compiled. Various recommendations including the introduction of individual identifiers had, he noted, been put to the Department but as yet no action had been taken on these although the Minister had recently signalled his intention to introduce legislation for reform of the electoral process.

C/65/09

MEETING OF RECYCLING AND ENVIRONMENT
TARGETS SET OUT BY THE DONEGAL WASTE
MANAGEMENT PLAN

On the proposal of Clr. Kelly, seconded by Clr. Doherty, the following motion was adopted:-

"That Donegal County Council endeavours to meet fully the recycling and environment targets set out by the Donegal Waste Management Plan, by National Government, and by EU directives and retain the staff necessary to achieve these targets."

Members were informed that: -

“Donegal County Council will endeavour to meet the recycling and environment targets in line with the Donegal Waste Management Plan. The Councils 2009 Adopted Budget makes provision to continue a strong response in this area having regard to the more constraining financial circumstances pertaining at present. It should be noted that other (external) factors such as market constraints nationally and internationally impact strongly on the Councils ability to achieve its targets in this area.”

Concern was expressed that with the implementation of a number of initiatives and in particular the opening of the new Civic Amenity Sites that any proposed reduction in manpower would have a detrimental effect on the service as a whole.

The Director of Water and Environment assured members that there was provision in the 2009 Expenditure Budget for the employment of Litter Wardens.

Members asked that every effort be made to retain and support Community Initiative Schemes.

The following Questions and Replies were noted:

C/66/09

PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS IN MUFF

The following question was submitted by Clr. MacLochlainn:-

"What progress has been made in delivering safe pedestrian crossings in the village of Muff?"

Clr. MacLochlainn was informed that:-

“Works commenced on the provision of traffic calming and a pedestrian refuge at Wheatfield estate in Muff recently but halted due to bad weather. It is anticipated that these works shall be completed prior to April 2009 as agreed with Members in December. A report was issued in 2008 in relation to the junction of the Burnfoot Road R239 and Muff Main Street (R238). In summary the provision of a pedestrian crossing can only be considered in the context of signalising the junction as a whole. Having reviewed the layout of the junction it is not considered appropriate to provide a signalised junction at this time with a three leg junction. Proposed further development in the area which would result in a four leg layout has been conditioned to provide a signalised junction. Members will continue to be updated as required at Electoral Area Meetings.”

C/67/09

PUBLIC LIGHTING AT INCH PIER

The following question was submitted by Clr. Conaghan:-

"Can the Council provide public lighting at Inch Pier?"

Clr. Conaghan was informed that:-

“There are two existing lights on Inch pier which were originally erected, paid for and maintained by the local fishermen. The fishermen some time ago ceased paying for the maintenance and energy bills for these lights. The marine section is presently negotiating with the ESB regarding the upgrading of the lights and taking the lights in charge. The marine section has also agreed to provide power points at the end of the pier to assist the fishermen in the maintenance of the boats.”

C/68/09

CONTINUE POLICY ON DRAINAGE

The following question was submitted by Clr. McGonagle:-

"Will the Council continue their policy on drainage due to the inclement weather?"

Clr. McGonagle was informed that:-

“Roads staff in each electoral area have been asked to concentrate on drainage works at this time.

Due to the inclement weather a lot of damage is being done to our roads and it is vital that we continue to concentrate our efforts to minimise this damage.

It is expected that drainage works will be given high priority by local area staff and members when the local roadworks programme is agreed.”

C/69/09

DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCIL LAND AT
ROCKYTOWN, BUNCRANA

The following question was submitted by Clr. MacLochlainn:-

"When will a dedicated council officer be appointed to manage the development of council land at Rockytown, Bunrana in partnership with the local community groups?"

Clr. MacLochlainn was informed that:-

“As reported recently this project is receiving urgent attention from a number of Services, including Housing, Planning, Community and Enterprise and Bunrana Town Council staff to address a number of issues regarding the project including funding to provide the necessary services to the lands. The issue liaising with the local group will also be addressed in this context.”

C/70/09

FUTURE OF THE GREENCASTLE/MAGILLIGAN CAR
FERRY

The following question was submitted by Clr. McGuinness:-

"Will the Council convene a meeting with all relevant bodies North and South of the Border to support the future of the Greencastle/Magilligan Car Ferry?"

Clr. McGuinness was informed that:-

“The contract with the current service provider serving the Greencastle/Magilligan Ferry route is scheduled to conclude in June 2009 and ongoing discussions are taking place between Donegal County Council and Limavady Borough Council with a view to assess how best the terms of reference for a further contract period can be prepared and subsequently advertised to interested parties for the provision of the service. This is being carried out against increasing financial challenges faced by both Councils. Every effort is currently being made by the Councils to ensure a continuation of the service against this challenging background.

It should be noted that previous requests have been made for funding from Central Government and from Tourism Development support bodies such as Failte Ireland to assist in supporting costs associated with the provision of both this service and the service on the Swilly but, to date, no organisation or body has indicated a willingness to provide such funding. Further attempts will be made in this regard for 2009.

Clarification will also be sought with regard to what other additional bodies, at this juncture, may be in a position to assist and a meeting can then be held to assess how best they can facilitate and support the continuation of this service.”

C/71/09

ASSISTANCE FOR THE PROVISION OF A LIBRARY FOR THE NEWTOWNCUNNINGHAM AREA

The following question was submitted by Clr. Conaghan:-

"What assistance can be given to the provision of a library for the Newtowncunningham area?"

Clr. Conaghan was informed that:-

“The County Library infrastructure will be developed in line with the priorities identified in the new strategic plan. There are a number of towns in the county with large populations where services remain to be developed in terms of buildings and public opening hours. Donegal County Council has

researched the provision of library/information services to smaller and dispersed populations in partnership with agencies and community organisations. This model has proved successful in several instances. Should there be suitable spaces and/or community partners in other parts of the county, e.g. Newtowncunningham, library staff will follow this up and develop plans accordingly. Given the financial situation, all library services are being reviewed in order to deliver the best possible service within available resources, and it is unlikely a new service point could currently be delivered on. Having said that, in anticipation of better times ahead, all opportunities for future development will be considered. Newtowncunningham is currently served by the Cross Border Mobile Library which visits for 2 hours every Thursday.”

C/72/09

NEW INTERNAL DIRECTORY TO MEMBERS

The following question was submitted by Clr. McGuinness:-

"Will the Council circulate a new internal directory to members?"

Clr. McGuinness was informed that:-

“Arrangements will be made to provide members with an updated list of contact details.”

C/73/09

MALIN SEWERAGE SCHEME

The following question was submitted by Clr. McGonagle:-

"When will Malin Sewerage Scheme be operational?"

Clr. McGonagle was informed that:-

“The principal infrastructure for Malin Sewerage scheme is substantially complete and the making of connections will commence in the next few weeks. The scheme is expected to be fully operational within the next 2 months.”

C/74/09

TRANSFER OF LAND AT BALLYLAST CASTLEFN
UNDER SECTION 183

The following question was submitted by Clr. Harvey:-

"Will this council follow through on its commitments to transfer a plot of land to an individual in Ballylast, Castlefin, on the transfer of land under section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001?"

Clr. Harvey was informed that:-

"It is understood that this relates to a case from 1998 and that a comprehensive report on this matter was prepared previously which ended up with the Ombudsman. It is also understood that the recommendation of the Ombudsman was that the piece of land in question should remain in the ownership of Donegal County Council.

The file will be located and a fuller reply issued after it has been reviewed."

C/75/09

SEWAGE PROBLEMS AT BALLYRAINE

The following question was submitted by Clr. Brogan:-

"When will works start on sewage problems at Ballyraine that have been causing the road to be flooding and closed to traffic in the last year and ensuring that all damaged caused will be repaired immediately?"

Clr. Brogan was informed that:-

"Work started on site on 21st January 2009 on emergency works to relieve localised flooding problems in Ballyraine, Letterkenny that arise from a combination of inclement weather, stormwater ingress to trunk sewer lines, and trunk sewer capacity limitations. Further significant remedial works will be carried out under the Letterkenny Sewerage scheme DBO contract which is expected to commence late in 2009. As soon as the emergency works are complete the damage caused by the flooding will be dealt with."

C/76/09

PROGRESS ON PHASE 3 N56 MOUNTAINTOP TO TERMON FROM BLUEBANKS TO KILMACRENNAN

The following question was submitted by Clr. Brogan:-

"Can this council have an up to date report on what progress has been made on Phase 3 on N56 Mountaintop to Termon from Bluebanks to Kilmacrennan?"

Clr. Brogan was informed that:-

“SCHEME STATUS

The N56 Coolboy - Kilmacrennan scheme is currently funded under the NRA ‘Pavement and Minor Improvement’ Grants. These grants deal only with projects of predicted outturn expenditure of €5m or less.

All proposed public projects that are estimated to involve capital expenditure in excess of €0.5m are subject to review under Project Appraisal Guidelines (Dept. of Finance 2005) and in the case of national roads the NRA Project Appraisal Guidelines (Mar 2008).

The necessary Appraisal Report in accordance with most recent NRA guidelines is currently being finalised for this scheme.

In 2008 the design office completed preliminary survey and designs on route options for the first part of the appraisal process (‘Interim Business Case’). In addition the required appraisal data has been substantially collected by the NRDO. Assessments completed in 2008 include archaeology, ecology, landscape and visual and geological.

There are two options open to us now.

1. Any overall scheme option (3.7km) will exceed the €5m threshold for ‘Pavement and Minor Improvement’ works. The present estimate is €12m. It would therefore have to be developed with the NRA as a ‘Major’ and in accordance with the appropriate ‘Major’ scheme development guidelines. This could mean that the project will be deferred for many years.
2. Alternatively the scheme might be divided into smaller discrete elements. A minimum of three phases would be required to ensure that this important road development could progress as a ‘Pavement and Minor Improvement’ project. This could mean that some progress may be possible over a shorter time scale.

PROGRAMME 2009

The Project Appraisal Report, currently being finalised, is due for issue to the NRA in February 2009. This report recommends the phased development of the N56 Coolboy Kilmacreannan

Subject to NRA approval of the report, to NRA provision of adequate funding and to the availability of staff (which will be review when grants are received), detailed design and tender documentation shall be completed for Phase 1 of the N56 Coolboy Kilmacreannan (Blue Banks) by end of 2009. A specific allocation of €75,000 has been sought from the NRA for 2009 for this purpose. As per 2008 a general design allocation (€300,000) was also sought.”

C/77/09

INCLUSION OF FUNDING IN DCS BUDGET FOR THE LETTERKENNY AREA OF A PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AT AURA LETTERKENNY REGIONAL SPORTS CENTRE

The following question was submitted by Clr. Larkin:-

"Will the Council include the funding for a pedestrian crossing at the Aura Letterkenny Regional Sports centre in the DCS budget for the Letterkenny Area?"

Clr. Larkin was informed that:-

“The allocation of funds for 2008 have been made for the Letterkenny Area as noted in the Capital Budget. The Capital Budget for 2009 provides for funding from the Development Contribution Scheme (Roads). The allocation of these funds has yet to be made to each electoral Area. The priorities for 2009 will be agreed with members at Electoral Area Meetings as in previous years noting the commitments already made for projects such as Rossbracken Bridge and taking into consideration new requests such as this crossing which is important.”

C/78/09

NEW CIVIC AMENITY SITE IN LETTERKENNY

The following question was submitted by Clr. Larkin:-

"Will this Council open talks with Letterkenny Town Council about that Local Authority running the new Civic Amenity Site in Letterkenny?"

Clr. Larkin was informed that:-

“The 2009 Adopted Budget for Donegal County Council has provided for the opening of three new Civic Amenity sites at Letterkenny, Dungloe and Milford from the beginning of April 2009. The intention is to deliver a consistent level of service at these similar facilities across the county which is proportionate to the demand arising. Economies of scale will accrue to the collective Donegal Local Authority grouping through the use of existing arrangements such as those in place for essential management and removal of materials. It is considered that the short and long term challenges and needs arising will be best served by a continuation of the approach planned (i.e. the operation of the Letterkenny facility by Donegal County Council).”

C/79/09

FIRE SERVICE RESPONSE WHEN PROPERTY IS BEING FLOODED

The following question was submitted by Clr. Kennedy:-

"Why is the Fire Service not responding to 999 calls made when a persons property is being flooded?"

Clr. Kennedy was informed that:-

“The Fire Service will respond in circumstances where a response is necessary. In deciding to respond the Service will have regard to the availability of other (more appropriate) response options from within the Councils resource base. These options include relevant sections of the Council such as Roads if it is within their responsibility. It should be noted that incidents such as those referred to generally occur during adverse weather conditions when there may be multiple calls at the same time in the same areas. In these type of incidents the Rostered Senior Officer will be informed by CAMP West and will prioritise the responses based on information to hand.”

C/80/09 FIRE SERVICE NOT BEING TURNED OUT TO ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

The following question was submitted by Clr. Kennedy:-

"Why is the Fire Service not being turned out to RTA's (Road Traffic Accidents) when the Ambulance Service has been called in line with most Fire services throughout the Country?"

Clr. Kennedy was informed that:-

"In late 2008 a set of Guidelines have been agreed between HSE Ambulance Service and Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim Fire Services following extensive consideration by the agencies concerned dealing with response arrangements for incidents such as those raised. Donegal has led this initiative in establishing this set of guidelines which through their application will, it is intended, ensure appropriate response by the Fire Service. These guidelines and their effectiveness will be reviewed in mid March 2009 by HSE ambulance senior personnel and chief fire officers Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim. The guidelines have been circulated to each station officer in the Region."

C/81/09 FUNDS FOR CARRICK STREET

The following question was submitted by Clr. Byrne:-

"Can this council apply to Roinn Na Gaeltachta for matching funds for Carrick Street in addition to the 100,000 earmarked in the restoration grants 2009?"

Clr. Byrne was informed that:-

"The Area Engineer will contact Roinn na Gaeltachta Engineer in the first instance with a view to progressing this request."

C/82/09 ARRANGEMENTS TO REMOVE FALLEN ROCK ON R263 DOONALT TO GLENCOLUMCILLE

The following question was submitted by Clr. Byrne:-

"Can this council now make arrangements to remove the fallen rock at Doonalt, Glencolumcille on the R263 as priority?"

Clr. Byrne was informed that:-

“Tenders are now being sought to have the rock, which is obstructing the road at Glencolumcille, removed. Work can commence as soon as a suitable contractor has been appointed.”

C/83/09

DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE FOR BALLYSHANNON
ALONG THE BALLYSHANNON/BUNDORAN BY-PASS

The following question was submitted by Clr. O’Neill:-

"Will this Council ask the NRDO to immediately review the situation regarding the lack of directional signage for Ballyshannon, along the Ballyshannon/Bundoran By-Pass. At several junctions there are No Signs indicating Ballyshannon?"

Clr. O’Neill was informed that:-

“The signage on the N15 Bundoran Ballyshannon Bypass is fully in accordance with national standards. The design has been checked and certified by the contractor in conjunction with the NRA. Any particular issues should be brought to the attention of the Donegal National Roads Design Office. The NRDO are currently managing a number of Sign Refurbishment Contracts on national routes including the N15. Additional signage identified and deemed appropriate may be dealt with as part of these contracts.”

C/84/09

UP-TO-DATE POSITION REGARDING PROPOSED
NEW CAR PARK IN BALLYSHANNON TOWN
CENTRE

The following question was submitted by Clr. O’Neill:-

"What is the up to date position regarding the Proposed New Car Park for Ballyshannon Town Centre?"

Clr. O'Neill was informed that:-

“The CPO drawing schedule is complete and are currently being examined by senior staff.

The critical path requiring completion before entering the site is as follows.

1 month to prepare notices and CPO documentation

1 month for advertisements and searches

6 weeks advertisement

2 weeks for submissions

Forwarded to An Bord Pleanala

Submissions may require an oral hearing.

Oral hearings can take up to between 1 month and 6 months

Oral hearings can then take a further 5 months to confirm or otherwise

Notice to treat and Notice to enter can then approx 4 weeks.

This means that it could be December 09 or May 2010 before the council would be in a position to carry out any works, subject to the necessary funding being identified.

The main decision facing the Council at this time on this car park is how to fund it. It is recognised that the car park is very important to the town, however, a funding stream will need to be identified before the CPO is made and this will be examined in the coming weeks.”

C/85/09

UP-TO-DATE POSITION REGARDING LENNOX'S BRIDGE ON THE BUNDORAN – KINLOUGH ROAD

The following question was submitted by Clr. McEniff:-

"What is the up to date position re Lennox's Bridge on the Bundoran - Kinlough Road?"

Clr. McEniff was informed that:-

“Donegal County Council have no plans for this bridge but I understand that Leitrim County Council are progressing a design for improvements to the bridge.”

C/86/09 INSTALLATION OF SOLID FUEL RANGE IN SI 6228
AT LAGHEY BARR

The following question was submitted by Clr. McEniff:-

"Can a solid fuel range instead of an oil fired one be installed in S.I. 6228 currently under construction at Laghey Barr?"

Clr. McEniff was informed that:-

“Under the current Building Regulations it is necessary to be able to have full control of the primary heating source for the dwelling and it primarily for this reason that oil fired central heating is the preferred option as the primary source of heating in all our new social houses. This type of heating is more efficient and also requires much less regular maintenance than a solid fuel range. In the case of S.I.’s the Council have included in the house design for the provision of a second independent flue and associated mechanical fittings to allow for the provision of secondary heating source such as a solid fuel range without the need for any invasive structural or mechanical works to the fabric of the house. This option is only available to the applicant once the house is being purchased through the tenant purchase scheme or such other method of purchasing the dwelling from the Council.”

C/87/09 COST OF ALL SERVICES TO THIS COUNCIL THAT
WERE PROVIDED FROM OUTSIDE THE
JURISDICTION

The following question was submitted by Clr. McGarvey:-

"What was the cost of all services to this Council that were provided from outside this jurisdiction?"

Clr. Mc Garvey was informed that:-

“The logistics of gathering the information necessary to answer the question raised by Cllr McGarvey are such that it has not been possible to provide the information within the available timeframes. This arises due to the relatively unbounded nature of the query. It is intended to liaise directly with Cllr McGarvey to establish if the query /

question can be refined so that it can be answered at an early future date.”

C/88/09 OBSOLETE SEWERAGE TREATMENT PLANT IN KILMACRENNAN

The following question was submitted by Clr. McGarvey:-

"When will the obsolete Sewerage Treatment Plant in Kilmacrennan problems be dealt with as it is causing serious problems with pollution and is affecting adjacent property?"

Clr. McGarvey was informed that:-

“Kilmacrennan Sewerage Scheme is listed as a Serviced Land initiative scheme on the Departments Water Services Investment Programme. In this regard some special development levies have been collected which will be sufficient to fund preliminary design of the scheme, the purchase of much needed land for expansion, Part 8 Planning, and minimal improvements to the treatment process. It is unclear at this point when and from where funding will be available to effect the required improvements to the treatment works.”

C/89/09 UP-TO-DATE FUNDING APPLICATION FOR THE UPGRADE OF THE CHURCHILL WATER PROJECT

The following question was submitted by Clr. McBride:-

"What is the up to date situation regarding the funding application for the upgrade of the Churchill Water Project?"

Clr. McBride was informed that:-

“The preliminary design report for the Churchill Water Supply Scheme was completed in September 2008 and submitted to the Rural Water Section of the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government. Initial verbal feedback indicates that the Department considers the overall scheme proposed to be expensive. Notwithstanding this the Council intends to seek approval for stage 1 priority advance works which if implemented will result in improved supply to consumers in the area.”

C/90/09 DEVELOPMENT CHARGES IN THE MILFORD ELECTORAL AREA

The following question was submitted by Clr. McBride:-

"How much has been collected in development charges in the Milford Electoral Area in the last 5 years, where has the money been spent, and how much is outstanding?"

Clr. McBride was informed that:-

The total amount levied in Development Contributions for the Milford EA in the past 5 years to date is €4,723,037.

Expenditure as follows:€

Levied: 4,723,037

Drawn to Date Roads 390,000

Water & Sewer 1,799,532

CC&E 159,102

2,348,634

Balance 2,374,403

Less: Works in Lieu of Payment 318,438

Payment Plans Currently 356,031

Suspended

Allowance for Irrecoverable 10% 182,605

857,074

Balance Remaining 1,517,329

Available details for projects are set out below:

DCS exp Water Services 2004-2008 (inclusive)			
Leisure and Public Facilities Programme			
Job Number	Project		
73888163	Rathmullan Lifeguard/ W.C. Facilities (proposed)	€200,000	
		€200,000	
Small Schemes Programme			
Job Number	Project		
73188106	Cranford	€183,264	

	Letterkenny Water Supply and Portleen WS	€220,000
		€403,264
Large Schemes Programme		
Job Number	Project	
	Fanad Regional Water Supply Scheme	€223,905
		€223,905
Service Land Initiative Programme		
Job Number	Project	
73188166	Rathmullen Environmental Impact Works	€19,466
53288022	Kilmacrennan	€60,000
		€79,466
Capital Replacement Programme		
Job Number	Project	
53128001	Goldrum - Chlorination	€214,110
53228001	Milford SS Aerator	€31,570
53228002	Kilmacrennan Network	€201,079
53145004	Ballaghderg Replacement	€20,969
53145005	Milford Headworks Replacement	€53,945
53145005	Milford WS	€11,648
53245001	Downings Pier Pumping Station	€57,065
53145006	Moyle Hill & Doon Well Pumping Station	€28,947
53145007	Downings Village Pumping Station - Caravan Park	€8,228
53145008	Portlean Facilitation Works	€11,277
53145009	Rathmullan Shore Rd Pipe Replace	€29,111
53145010	Milford Headworks Railings	€11,523
53145012	Upgrading of Chlorine Installation Milford	€1,420
		€680,892
General Water Services Fund		
Job Number	Project	
53188003	Replacement Water main Kilmacrennan Road Milford	€63,001
73188174	Emergency Works Lough Salt	€51,075
53145003	Rathmullan Pier Road	€32,771
		€146,847
Water Conservation		
Job Number	Project	
53145001	Dunmore Pipe Replacement	€9,451
53145002	Ruthmullan	€22,765
53128007	Trentagh Pipe Replacement	€27,402
73187004	Cresslough	€567
73187008	Milford	€4,972
		€65,157

			€1,799,532
Note	All figures are approximate		

Community & Enterprise

Community, Culture & Enterprise - Development Contributions Position at 31/12/08

Milford Electoral Area

DCS Levies raised to 31/12/08:	355,066.82
Less DCS Monies transferred to date:	159,102.17
Balance:	195,964.65

Amount of DCS monies transferred to each project

Job Code	Job Type	Job	Amount
764CE030	Walking Routes	Woodland, Milford	16,000
764CE019	Playgrounds	Ramelton	10,000
764CE020	Playgrounds	Rathmullan	83,000
564CE001	Amenity Facility	Ramelton Park	47,607.17
764CE051	Tourism Facilities	Donegal Interperative Infrastructure Project	2,495
Total:			159,102.17

Roads Schemes

List of Development Charge Scheme works allocated funding in the Milford Electoral Area between 2005 and 2009

Priority	Location	Description	Cost Estimate
1	Carrigart	Continuation of footpath in front of Health Centre on Milford Road to Gortnabrade Road Junction	€20,000.00
2	Milford	Replacement of Footpath at Milford National School	€20,000.00
3	Ramelton	Town Park towards post Office	€12,500.00
4	Churchill	Completion of low cost accident works at Garton Bridge	€7,500.00
5	Ramelton	Remove and replace existing footpath along Shore road	€35,000.00
6	Carrigart	Completion of Footpath on Milford side of Carrigart	€20,000.00
7	Kilmacrennan	Leiter road junction safety measures.	€20,000.00
8	Kilmacrennan	Improvement of Vision lines at R246 / R249 Junction at Tawny Lower on the Kilmacrennan to Milford Road	€10,000.00
9	Carrigart	Improvement of vision lines at the Glenree Junction on the R245 Carrigart to Lackagh Bridge Road	€10,000.00
10	Milford	Crash Barrier on the R245 at Rossgarrow	€20,000.00
11	Downings	Erection of Safety Barrier at Murlough, Downings	€10,000.00
12	Milford	Replace & Construct Footpath from Upper Mount Merrion towards Mulroy College	€20,000.00
13	Rathmullan	Replace & Construct section of Footpath on Pier Road in Rathmullan	€25,000.00

14	Rathmullan	Replace & Construct section of Footpath at Front Street in Rathmullan	€20,000.00
15	Kilmacrennan	Kilmacrennan Chapel footpath	€25,000.00
16	Meenatinney	Meenatinney. Accident location	€6,667.00
17	Kilmacrennan	Complete footpath link. Leiter-Kilmacrennan	€15,000.00
18	Carrigart	70m of Crash Barrier at Lackagh Bridge	€15,000.00
19	Kilmacrennan	Erection of Safety Barrier at Derek Cemerys on Lough Salt Road.	€25,000.00
20	Carrigart	Vision lines at Devlinreagh Jn, and minor footpath repairs	€6,666.00
21	Rathmullan	Repair Retaining wall in front of Coast guard station, Rathmullen	€40,000.00
22	Portsalon	Duntinney junction, Portsalon	€6,667.00

C/91/09 PLANS TO REVIEW TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT IN THE BALLYBOFEY/STRANORLAR AREA

The following question was submitted by Clr. Reid:-

"In view of the recent decisions regarding the Twin Towns By-pass, have the council any plans to undertake a review of the traffic management in the Ballybofey - Stranorlar area?"

Clr. Reid was informed that:-

“The appraisal of Traffic Management in Ballybofey/Stranorlar will be included as part of the McClay's Corner Traffic Light project. This is so that the most cost efficient solution for the traffic management problems in the area can be implemented. As mentioned in Budget 2009, our road design service has a long list of jobs that need to be prioritised for both time and funds in order to get them advanced.

Should this course of action be agreed, the preliminary appraisal, including costings, could be available in June 09.”

C/92/09 NON DOMESTIC WATER METERING PROJECT MONIES OUTSTANDING FOR 2008

The following question was submitted by Clr. Slowey:-

"How much money is outstanding at the end of 2008 to Donegal County Council under the Non Domestic Water

Metering Project. The total amount outstanding at the end of 2008 and the outstanding amounts per Electoral Area please?"

Clr. Slowey was informed that:-

“As set out on Page 238 of the 2009 Revenue Budget Book "the total amount outstanding for Water Charges at the time of writing is €6.9m approximately and is projected to be €9m approximately when the 2008 Annual Financial Statement is completed. This will be following issue of bills in early 2009 that refer to 2008 consumption, the completion as well of all necessary reconciliations and the detailed examination of all individual accounts outstanding. In essence by matching income to the relevant accounting period -December Monthly accounts, Quarterly and Half Yearly accounts ending the 31st December 2008 our gross Water income in the Income and Expenditure account for the 2008 Financial Year is credited with billed amounts for these billing periods which we will be issuing in January and February 2009. By crediting such income to the 2008 Financial Year it also has to be reflected in our Debtors figures in the Council's Balance Sheet as at the 31st December 2008. It is anticipated that the Debtors figure for Non Domestic Water charges when such bills are included will be €9.0m approx following all necessary reconciliations and adjustments.

The breakdown of the actual billed amount of €6.932m outstanding -as per the Budget Book-by Electoral area is as follows:

Inishowen EA	€1.161m
Donegal EA	€1.905m
Glenties EA	€0.634m
Letterkenny EA	€1.466m
Milford EA	€0.728m
Stranorlar EA	€0.847m
Others	€0.191m
Total	€6.932m

The up to date position on the €6.932m is that €6.448m is now outstanding for payment as at 26th January 2009.”

C/93/09 DELEGATION OF POWERS TO AREA MANAGERS DEALING WITH WATER CHARGES

The following question was submitted by Clr. Alcorn:-

"When will powers be delegated to the various Area Managers dealing with Water Charges, to have write offs done when there is genuine error in accounts?"

Clr. Alcorn was informed that:-

“Authority is already delegated to Area Managers to write off monies due for water charges in appropriate circumstances. The existing limits where authority to write off has been delegated are under review.”

C/94/09 STAFF COMPLEMENT AT THE NATIONAL ROADS DESIGN OFFICE IN DONEGAL TOWN

The following question was submitted by Clr. Slowey:-

"Can Donegal County Council maintain the full staff complement at the National Roads Design Office in Donegal Town in 2009 so as to allow this Council progress N.R.A. projects in Donegal into the future

Clr. Slowey was informed that:-

“At present, Donegal County Council are awaiting the Annual Grant Allocations from the NRA. During the last quarter of 2008, submissions were made to the NRA by the NRDO seeking grants for the various National Route Projects within the County.

The NRDO is 100% funded by the NRA and therefore the staff and output of the office in 2009 will depend on the allocation received. Clearly, the Council is interested in progressing the maximum amount of work possible.”

C/95/09 LOCAL AUTHORITY MORTGAGE AND AFFORDABLE HOME PARTNERSHIP

The following question was submitted by Clr. Kelly:-

"Does this County Council intend to introduce the Local Authority Mortgage with the support of the Affordable Home Partnership which was made available since November 2008 to first time buyers under the Government Equity Initiative?"

Clr. Kelly was informed that:-

“Q1. The Government announced two schemes towards the end of 2008. One related to the Home Choice Loan which was announced on 14th October in the context of Budget 2009. This scheme is designed to provide a necessary response to a very particular set of circumstances which exist in the existing housing market at this time, namely, a lack of availability of sufficient credit for first time buyers. For a limited period, the State is extending a line of credit to such households who wish to purchase at this time. To qualify for a Home Choice Loan, applicants must earn more than €40,000 or €50,000 in the case of joint applications per annum. Loans of up to 92% of the market value of the property, subject to a maximum loan amount of €285,000 are available. The Affordable Homes Partnership administers the scheme. Applications must be made through mortgage brokers who are approved by the Affordable Homes Partnership. Four designated Local Authorities will do the actual advance of monies, with Galway County Council covering the North West. This scheme has been operational from 1st January 2009.

The other scheme, which was also announced in the context of Budget 2009, is a new Government Equity Loan arrangement which is to be introduced for affordable loans. While, the purchase transaction under the new arrangements will be largely unchanged from the purchasers prospective, instead of units being sold at a discounted price, with the value of the discount being subject to a reducing clawback, the State will take an equity stake in affordable units sold. The purchaser will have the option of either buying out the remaining equity in steps or at the end of a fixed period. In order to give effect to the change from a clawback to a equity loan approach, legislation will be required and it is understood that provision in this regard will be made by way of amendment of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions)

Bill during its passage through the Oireachtas. In the meantime the clawback arrangements will continue to apply in relation to the purchase of affordable units. No further details on this scheme have been received by the Council to date.”

C/96/09 PERCENTAGE AND NUMBER OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL CLIENTS IN VARIOUS HOUSING SCHEMES IN ARREARS TO THE END OF 2008

The following question was submitted by Clr. Kelly:-

"In light of the recent turmoil in Mortgages and the undisclosed number of repossessions by the banks, what percentage and number of Donegal County Council's clients in the various housing schemes are in arrears to the end of 2008?"

Clr. Kelly was informed that:-

“There were 1,546 (37%) of all rents / tenant purchase / RAS accounts in arrears at 31st December 2008. The nett amount of the arrears was €814,522.

The arrears have been reducing consistently since 2003 when they stood at €1.2m, (80% collection) to the current collection level of 90%.

In the case of the various loan schemes operated by the Council, there were 360 customers in arrears (€29,668).”

C/97/09 CONTINUATION OF THE ESSENTIAL WORK OF LITTER WARDENS IN 2009

The following question was submitted by Clr. Alcorn:-

"How does Donegal County Council intend to continue the most essential work of Litter Wardens in the various areas of this County in 2009?"

Clr. Alcorn was informed that:-

“The 2009 Adopted Budget provides for a continuation of a Litter Warden Service across the County. This service is (in conjunction with other related services that may impact upon it) currently the subject of review. It is intended that the review will provide the information needed to formulate the

most effective affordable service response aimed at maintaining and improving service within a constrained financial budget.”

C/98/09

MOTIONS FROM OTHER COUNCILS

The following motions from other Councils were noted.

Laois County Council

"That as a consequence of the sharp fall in house prices and difficulties obtaining credit, the members of this Council are calling on the Minister for the Environment and Local Government to bring forward a new scheme of affordable housing. The present scheme is no longer affordable for many people who should be able to use it to purchase a home".

Limerick County Council

“That, Limerick County Council call on the Minister for Education and Science not to introduce Third Level Fees for students and that we call on the Taoiseach to replace the Minister for Education following his refusal to reverse budget cutbacks in education, and that this motion be circulated to every local authority in the country.

Macroom Town Council

“That Macroom Town Council call on the Government to reverse the education cut-backs as outlined in the Budget in view of the adverse effect it will have on teachers, parents and students alike

Tralee Town Council

“That Tralee Town Council would request that the Minister for Health introduce a 24 hour 7 day social work service nationwide as soon as possible in line with the recommendations of the Committee of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child”.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

