

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF STRANORLAR
ELECTORAL AREA COMMITTEE HELD
MONDAY 11TH JULY 2006 IN REGIONAL
TRAINING CENTRE, STRANORLAR**

Members Present:

Cllr Alice Bonnar (Chairperson)
Cllr JJ Reid
Cllr Patrick McGowan

Officials Present:

Gerry Gilroy, Area Manager, Corporate
Tina Crawford, A/ASO, Corporate
Agnes Devenney, A/ASO, Corporate
Peadar Thomas, Area Manager, Roads & Transportation
Adrian McCool, Assistant Engineer, Roads & Transportation
Vincent Lynn, Senior Engineer, Roads & Transportation
Martin Flanagan, Senior Executive Technician, Roads & Transportation
Niall McCafferty, Technician, Roads & Transportation
Michael Kelly, Student Engineer, Roads & Transportation
Michael Breslin, Area Manager, Water, Environment & Emergency Services
Shane Sweeney, Assistant Engineer, Water, Environment & Emergency Services
Gary Martin, Senior Executive Officer, Community & Enterprise
Jeremy Smith, Walking Trails Development Officer
Barney McLaughlin, Community & Enterprise Development Officer
Paul Christy, Acting Area Manager, Planning & Economic Development
Tommy Doherty, Area Engineer, Housing & Building

Apologies:

Mary Hannigan, Area Manager, Housing & Building
Denis Kelly, Area Manager, Planning & Economic Development

SEC 23.00 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

23.00 Welcome

The Committee welcomed Cllr JJ Reid back after his recent operation.

23.01 Adoption of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr JJ Reid and seconded by Cllr Patrick McGowan, the Minutes of the Electoral Area Committee Meeting held on the 18th April 2006 were adopted. G Gilroy advised that neither the Castlefin Tidy Towns Group nor the Ard McCarron Group would be attending today's meeting. It was agreed that matters arising would be dealt with under each individual service.

SECTION 24.00 COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE

24.00 Development Contribution Scheme

A detailed report was circulated and presented by Garry Martin on the Operational Update of the Capital Programme for Community, Culture and Enterprise Funded under the Development Contribution Scheme, as of July 2006. Mr Martin stressed that these funds could only be expended on infrastructure owned by the County Council or State agencies.

In relation to playgrounds Mr Martin advised that the budget for this year in each electoral area was €83,000. He confirmed that Ballybofey/Stranorlar was top of the priority list however any unspent funding was being accrued given the absence of an agreed site. Consideration was being given to a 'Focal Point' Playground, perhaps on 'Brogans Land'. Work had commenced on the construction of a Playground in Castlefinn.

With regard to the replacement library for the Twin towns, this was high on the multi annual programme, and an announcement was expected next year. No final decision had been made regarding the Central Library.

Members expressed their dissatisfaction at the lack of progress in a number of areas. They felt that the Stranorlar Area was not getting an equitable return given the level of contributions levied in this area. Members requested details of the contributions gathered in the Stranorlar Area over the past year. Councillors maintained that any Development Contributions collected in their Electoral Area should be spent on projects there. Mr Martin confirmed that reconciliation would be undertaken which will show the amount of contributions levied and spent by Electoral Area.

Proposals for the library had been ongoing for the past 35 years. Members also felt that the delay in progressing the 'One Stop Shop' was holding back the library project. Members were also unhappy that no site had been finalised for a playground and no progress made on preparing a 'Master Plan' for the Drumboe area. Members also wished that proposals for Convoy also be formulated.

Members also referred to the 'percent' funding for Art, and highlighted the lack of projects in this area. It was suggested that a project featuring 'Isaac Butt' be progressed in the area. Concern was expressed that a substantial amount of this funding was being spent on staff/administrative costs.

Jeremy Smith, the Walking Trails Development Officer also made a presentation on progress within the Stranorlar Area. Mr Smith outlined the main walking routes in the Stranorlar/Ballybofey Area; namely part of Sil na Finne, Drumboe Woods, Trusk Lough & Mullaghagarry Wood.

Members welcomed the appointment of Mr Smith and called for this project to be funded into the future. They agreed that these walking trails needed to be developed. Cllr McGowan said it would be important to get landowners approval and utilise the area's natural amenities. Cllr Reid proposed that shorter walking routes in urban areas, including footpaths and public lighting should also be developed to encourage walking for health promotion.

Members also welcomed the additional protection for Trusk Lough included in the new County Development Plan.

24.01 Cultural Services

Members noted response circulated with Agenda to issues raised at the last meeting.

24.02 Community Consultation

Members noted report circulated with Agenda.

Mr McLaughlin informed Members that he had met with the Local Group STAG who expressed an interest in developing a river walk. Cllr JJ Reid suggested the “Old Pound” site for developing and agreed with Cllr Patrick McGowan that the ownership of the site needed to be confirmed first.

24.03 Inter Organisational Local Development

Members noted report circulated with Agenda.

24.04 Archives & Museum Service

Members noted report circulated with Agenda

24.05 Member Development Fund

Members noted report circulated with Agenda

24.06 Donegal County Childcare Committee Ltd

Members noted Progress Report circulated with Agenda

SEC 25.00 HOUSING AND BUILDING

Tommy Doherty conveyed apologies on behalf of Mary Hannigan who was on annual leave.

Cllr McGowan enquired why no ‘administrative’ person was present to represent the Area manager in spite of his having specifically requested Mr Liam Kelly, Housing Director and Assistant County Manager, for a member of the Housing Administrative Staff to be present at this meeting.

25.00 Central Heating/Remedial Works

Cllr P McGowan requested an up to date report on Central Heating Programme in the Area. Members were advised that the first 20 houses were to be done. It was confirmed that a full report would be available for the next meeting.

Cllr McGowan also requested a report in relation to the request for the replacement of hardwood windows at Drumkeen Cottages, and enquired into the Departments policy in relation to this.

25.01 Capital Programme.

Tommy Doherty handed out report on the up to date position in relation to Rural Cottages under the 2004-2008 Capital Programme and confirmed that an up to date report on the remainder of the Capital Programme would be available for the next meeting

Grass Cutting

Cllr Alice Bonnar commented that on a recent visit to Hillcrest Crescent, she was embarrassed to see a large volume of cut grass lying untidily on the open areas of the estate. And at a vacant house in the same estate, the grass was badly overgrown. In reply to the vacant house comment Tommy Doherty responded that as yet Housing had not received the keys. He confirmed that and grass cutting had been put out to tender. Both issues will be followed up

Tenant Purchase Scheme.

Members referred to perceived difficulties in relation to inconsistent valuations for Rural Cottages. Cllr Bonnar suggested that Housing Service should seek two independent valuations to ensure consistency in the Tenant Purchase Scheme process.

25.02 Derelict Dwellings at The Curragh and Ard McCarron

Cllr McGowan raised the issue of the vacant house at the Curragh, which has been reported to be rat infested and the possibility that the Council might purchase same.

Cllr Reid also raised the issue of the empty house at Ard McCarron, which has been on the market for some time.

Councillors requested reports on options in relation to these two dwellings.

25.03 Vacant Houses

Cllr McGowan queried the time it takes to repair vacant houses. He asked that any Council housing stock over 30years old, as far as possible, be brought up to current standards especially ranges and wiring and left in good repair prior to letting.

Mr Doherty confirmed that all houses were inspected thoroughly, including ranges. He confirmed that all wiring and fixtures & fittings are checked and certified by a qualified electrician.

25.03 One Stop Shop

Members were advised that no update was available for today's meeting.

Members expressed their frustration at the lack of progress in relation to this matter.

Cllr Reid proposed and it was unanimously agreed that the County Manager be requested to attend the next Electoral Area Meeting.

25.04 Drumkeen Plebiscite.

Cllr Bonnar referred to the recent correspondence circulated to current and former tenants in Drumkeen in relation to a proposal to plant 10 trees in the area. She conveyed the dissatisfaction locally that private householders had not been consulted and that there was also concern regarding the wording of the document and the short time allowed them consider the matter. Members agreed that they request that the matter be deferred until the Area Committee considers the matter further at the next meeting.

SEC 26.00 ROADS & TRANSPORTATION

26.00 Takeover of Private Housing Estates

Vincent Lynn, Senior Engineer and his staff presented a detailed report on the takeover of private housing estates. The report, in three stages, outlined the current position in relation to take over of estates constructed prior to 1996, the current policy of the Council adopted in September 2005 and the current position in relation to applications for takeover of estates constructed post 1996.

Mr Lynn confirmed that all developers have been make aware of this new policy and sent an application form, but to date only 15 applications out of a possible 250 have been received. He acknowledged that the Council couldn't move forward on this issue until applications are received.

Mr Michael Kelly circulated and presented an initial draft proposal for a new integrated underground services layout. When finally agreed this could be implemented as a condition of future Planning Permissions.

Mr Lynn asked that members consider the policy proposed which will be presented for adoption following consultations with other agencies at the end of 2006.

26.01 Castlefin Bridge

Mr Peadar Thomas circulated a report in relation to funding of €14,250 under the PEACE 11 Programme which will fund a report summarising and examining the repair and strengthening options for Castlefin Bridge.

This report will be presented to members at the September meeting to assist consideration of the best option to be pursued. Members requested that the consultants be invited to the September meeting.

Mr Thomas confirmed that special funding had been sought for the replacement of this bridge from the Department of the Environment back in March. No special funding had been identified to date.

26.02 EU Co-Funding Programme 2007.

Mr Thomas outlined the background to the EU Co-Funding Priority list and recommended that €400,000 for the completion of Dreenan Bridge and the balance Link Road (Slip Road at Mulrines) be agreed as first and second priorities for 2007. While accepting this recommendation members also asked that the Council be requested to 'top slice' €1m, as matching funding to replace Castlefin Bridge. Members stressed the strategic importance of this bridge as an access to the whole county.

In relation to Dreenan Bridge Cllr McGowan asked for an approximate date on which the Bridge would be reopened. Mr Adrian McCool, Assistant Engineer advised it could be October 2006. Cllr McGowan proposed that the Bridge be opened at weekends to alleviate traffic congestion through the town. Mr McCool advised this would prolong ongoing work but agreed to the suggestion that it be opened temporarily for the two weeks in August when Councils Roads workers were on annual holidays.

26.03 Glenmore Junction

Mr McCool circulated a report, and map, in relation to the proposal to extinguish a right of way at Glenmore. This was required as part of the proposals for the acquisition of the land necessary for this junction re-alignment.

This matter was presented to the area members before its inclusion on the agenda for the meeting of the full Council.

Members indicated their approval.

26.04 Unnamed Roads in Ballybofey and Stranorlar

A report listing the unnamed roads in Ballybofey and Stranorlar and suggesting options was circulated at meeting. Members agreed to consider the recommendation and to discuss the matter further at next Electoral Area Meeting.

26.05 Kilross Junction

Cllr J J Reid referred to the ongoing dangerous situation at Kilross Junction and in particular a practice of vehicles skipping the queue by turning for Convoy and then doing a three point turn and driving back towards Stranorlar. He requested a status report from the Roads Department on this and also on the Letterkenny road where a number of fatal accidents had occurred. He also asked that the relevant D.N.R.D.O. staff be present at the next Electoral Area Meeting to discuss this. Cllr McGowan and Cllr Bonner supported this request.

26.06 Other Roads Matters

Local Improvement Schemes.

Members confirmed their agreement to the Draft LIS priority list discussed at the Roads Workshop earlier today.

Mr Thomas confirmed that details of the programme as agreed would be incorporated in the minutes of this meeting. [Appendix 1](#)

Lischooley Village

Cllr McGowan asked when the revised speed limit at the school in Lischooley would be introduced. Mr Thomas advised that this is part of the recent review of speed limits undertaken by Road Design.

Cllr McGowan enquired when the footpath as requested by the deputation from Lischooley will be constructed from the junction to Lischooley Villas. It was agreed that a report in relation to funding for this work be available for the next meeting. Cllr Bonnar supported this.

Broadband - Route of Fibre Optic Cable

Cllr McGowan requested details of the final route of the Broadband Fibre Optic Cable through the town of Stranorlar/Ballybofey.

Callan Cross Roads.

Cllr McGowan submitted that members are being advised of accidents at this location, which do not appear to be reported in the figures compiled by the Gardai. He requested that official details of the accidents at this location be available for the next meeting.

Stranorlar Car Park

Cllr Reid referred to the lack of progress in upgrading the Stranorlar Car Park, which he felt was looking worse than ever. He was advised that it was proposed that work would take place between November and April 2007.

Junction on Golf Course Road

Cllr Bonnar requested a Stop Sign be erected at the junction above the golf course on Golf Course Road.

Logue's Bridge.

Cllr Reid asked why the report requested on Logue's Bridge had still not been presented. It was agreed that this would be available for the next meeting.

Drumboe Road

Cllr Bonnar proposed that the road be widened close to the cemetery on Drumboe Road. Mr McCool confirmed that Claire McGeever, Executive Engineer was currently working on this project.

The Cross Village

Cllr McGowan submitted that the road surface at the crossroads in the village of The Cross had seriously disintegrated and road markings are worn away. As a result it is unclear to motorists who has right of way. He requested that this be attended to before a serious accident occurs.

Cllr Bonnar requested that a signpost showing The Cross village be erected in Killygordon.

SEC 27.00 WATER, ENVIRONMENT & EMERGENCY SERVICES
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Mr Breslin introduced Mr Shane Sweeney, Assistant Engineer who has been temporarily assigned to replace Mr Brendan Porter who is currently on sick leave. The Members welcomed Mr Sweeney to his new post.

Members also inquired about Mr Porter and asked that Mr Gilroy write to him and convey their best regards to him.

27.01 Ballybofey/Stranorlar Leisure Centre

Mr Michael Breslin informed Members that these discussions are on going with the groups involved.

27.02 Capital Programme

Mr Breslin informed Members that the Department of the Environment have asked the County Council to forward to them as a single proposal the following 3 schemes, Ballybofey/Stranorlar Sewerage Network, Castlefin and Lifford. Separate documentation for each of these 3 schemes had now to be combined in a single document. Members will be kept informed of progress.

27.03 Group Schemes

Liskeerin/Meenaboy Scheme

Mr Breslin confirmed the Liskeerin/Meenaboy Group Water Scheme will commence in the near future.

Letterbrick Group Scheme

Members sought an update on the Letterbrick Group Scheme, where the current contribution was estimated at €10,000.

Mr Breslin advised that a consultants report had recently been received which examined three options to improve water quality to the Fintown area:

- Lough Mourne
- Glenties
- Upgrading the treatment plant at Fintown.

Members asked that a detailed report be presented to the next meeting

27.04 Civic Amenity Site

Cllr Alice Bonner submitted that she has been approached by significant numbers of the general public who are complaining about the restricted opening hours at the Civic Amenity Site and in particular inaccessibility to the recycling banks. She proposed that the Council relocate these banks outside the gates of the site.

Mr Breslin explained the reason the banks were inside the site was to minimise the difficulties of littering experienced at other less secure locations.

Cllr McGowan suggested that the Council use the CCTV cameras already installed to monitor possible illegal dumping.

Cllr McGowan also raised the issue of information on recycling, especially regarding recycling different types of plastics. Mr Breslin agreed to discuss this with the Recycling Officer and agreed to request they attend the next Electoral Area meeting.

Pumping Station at Castlefinn.

Cllr McGowan enquired when the pumping station would be provided at Castlefinn.

Mr Breslin explained that there were some difficulties with delivery but he was confident that it would be in place by the end of the year.

SEC 28.00 PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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Mr Paul Christy, Acting Area Manager, conveyed apologies on behalf of Mr Denis Kelly who was on annual leave.

28.01 Causal Trading

Mr Paul Christy informed Members that the Causal Trading case has not moved forward and as of yet no Court date has been confirmed.

28.02 Consideration of recent refusals

Members noted report circulated with the Agenda. Mr Christie dealt with a number of queries.

28.03 Convoy/Castlefin Village Renewal Scheme

Cllr McGowan asked for an up to date report on the proposed works in Convoy and Castlefin under the Village Renewal Scheme. Members had been advised that €900,000 is to be spent on Convoy/Castlefin Village Renewal this summer. He enquired if this work had gone to tender yet and requested a full report on this for the next meeting.

SEC 29.00 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

29.00 The next scheduled meeting of the Electoral Area Committee will take place on Tuesday 5th September 2006 in the Stranorlar Training Centre.