

Minutes of Meeting of Municipal District of Stranorlar held on Tuesday 12th January 2016 in the Regional Training Centre, Stranorlar commencing at 11.00am.

Members Present:

Cllr Frank McBrearty. (Cathaoirleach)
Cllr Gary Doherty
Cllr Patrick McGowan
Cllr Gerry Crawford
Cllr Liam Doherty
Cllr. Martin Harley.

Officials Present:

Joe Peoples, Director of Service, Senior Management Team
Lynda Mc Gavigan, A/Area Manager, Housing/Corporate.
Paul Christy, Sen. Executive Planner, Planning Services.
Garrett Doherty, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Roads
Paddy Doherty, Divisional Manager, Community, Enterprise & Planning Services.
Suzanne Bogan, Waste Information Officer, Water & Environment.
Martina Morris, Senior Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

91.00 Corporate Services.

91.01. Votes of Sympathy.

Members passed a vote of sympathy on the passing of:

- **Paddy O'Donnell**, 87 Brookdale Park, Derry father of Martin O'Donnell, Ex. Engineer, Water Services, Stranorlar Municipal District.
- **Cora O'Donnell**, Woodlawn, Stranorlar, wife of former colleague Sean O'Donnell.
- **Anthony 'Tony' Ferguson**, Kinlough, Co. Leitrim, father of Maria Ferguson, Administrative Officer, Donegal Area.
- **Paddy Mc Brearty** - Corby, England formerly from Moneen , Raphoe.
- **Donal Monaghan**, Ardeskin, Donegal Town - former Donegal G.A.A. player and G.A.A. All Star.
- **Declan Holihan**, Barrack, Ramelton - who died as a result of a tragic road accident on 11/01/2016.

91.02. Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Workshop held on 1st December 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr. Patrick Mc Gowan and seconded by Cllr. Gary Doherty the minutes of the Workshop Meeting held on 1st December 2015 were confirmed.

91.03. Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Meeting held on 1st December 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr. Patrick Mc Gowan and seconded by Cllr. Liam Doherty the minutes of the Stranorlar Municipal District Meeting held on 1st December 2015 were confirmed.

91.04. Confirmation of date and venue for next Meeting.

Members confirmed that the next meeting of Stranorlar Municipal District would be held on *Wednesday 24th February 2016 @11.00 a.m. in the Council Chamber, Lifford.*

It was also agreed that a Workshop meeting would take place that day at 10.00a.m., prior to the Municipal District Meeting.

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| 92.00 Matters Arising. |
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Cllr. Mc Brearty addressed the Meeting and stated that he wished to make a statement in response to anonymous letters he had received, and, which he believed had also been sent to others present at the meeting:

- *He stated, for the record, that he had never been arrested or convicted in relation to any Drink-Driving offence.*

A number of the Members indicated they felt it was not appropriate, to be asked to respond to accusations contained in anonymous letters received by another Member, and, queried Cllr. Mc Brearty's decision to raise the issue at the Municipal District Meeting in this way.

Cllr. Gary Doherty, indicated that he wished to put on record that he did not have any convictions relating to Drink - Driving either but, expressed reservations about responding to anonymous letters in general.

93.00 Housing Services.

93.01. Social Housing Reports.

Members noted the contents of the reports circulated with the Agenda and presented by Ms. Lynda Mc Gavigan, Acting Area Manager, Housing /Corporate.

Ms. Mc Gavigan stated that since the report on Casual Vacancies had been compiled, the following 3 no houses had been re-offered to prospective tenants:

- 11 Hilltop Crescent, Stranorlar.
- 326 St. Eunans Tce, Raphoe.
- 4 Dergview, Castlefin.

It was hoped to issue offers again shortly in respect of another 4 no. houses:

- 34 Emmet Park, Castlefin
- 15 Railway Ave, Killygordon
- 16 Railway Ave, Killygordon
- 13 St. Bridgets Cres, Drumkeen.

In relation to 4 no. vacant houses at Meadowhill, Raphoe, Members re-iterated that the preferred option for this site was to demolish the existing houses and re-build more suitable housing on site.

The Members were advised that in respect of houses where works are required before the house may be re-let, it is intended that offers will be issued to prospective tenants once a contract has been put in place and works are being carried out.

93.02. Tenant Purchase Scheme - Shared Ownership.

Members expressed their concern that tenants of Shared Ownership houses will not be eligible to apply to buy out their houses under the new Tenant Purchase Scheme even though they are paying rent to the Council in respect of the portion of the house owned by D.C.C.

They are not eligible to apply, as under the terms of the new Scheme, the house must wholly owned by the Council

Members pointed out that many 'tenants' were finding it difficult to pay both rent and make mortgage re- payments on these houses and felt that they should be offered the opportunity to buy out the house in full.

It was agreed by the Members that this issue that should be brought to the Housing SPC for further discussion, and requested that the necessary steps be taken to ensure that it is included on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Housing S.P.C in February 2016.

93.03. Heating system in Council Houses.

In response to queries raised by the Members, Ms. Mc Gavigan stated that it is National policy that oil - fired central heating be installed in Council houses where possible. A lot of funding is being provided by the Dept to improve the BER ratings of Council houses and it is felt that oil-fired central heating gives the best results.

Therefore in line with National policy, D.C.C. has adopted oil heating as the standard for all 'new- builds', refurbishments etc (where possible).

While acknowledging Ms. Mc Gavigans comments, members felt that there should be some form of back -up heating system installed in Council houses, as oil is simply not a sustainable option for some tenants who cannot afford to buy a 'fill' of oil.

It was pointed out that generally a 1,000 litre oil tank is installed as standard in Council schemes, but as many tenants can only afford to buy one or two drums of oil at a time, members felt that the option of providing a smaller tank should be considered.

Members questioned if, in the case of older houses, where a range had previously been installed, a tenant can seek to have it repaired or replaced by D.C.C. if the range is no longer functioning properly.

They were advised that a lot of the older ranges cannot be repaired as parts are no longer available for them, but, that from time to time, a replacement range may be provided depending on the circumstances.

93.04. Furnishing/ Letting of Vacant Houses.

It was highlighted to Members that it is standard Council procedure to remove the oil burner once a house is vacated, and it is then put back again when the house has been re-let.

It is up to the prospective tenant to provide 'white goods' such as cookers, fridges, washing machines etc. There is financial assistance available through the Social Welfare system towards the cost of providing these goods and towards furnishing the house.

93.05. Windows & Doors.

The Members were advised that, the Dept has not yet given any indication that Phase 2 of the Energy Efficiency Programme (Windows & Doors) will be introduced this year. However, as part of the on-going review of the Tenants

Handbook, some limited funding may be available for the servicing of windows & doors, from an agreed allowance to be provided in respect of additional works / maintenance works to be carried out in exceptional circumstances.

94.00 Community, Enterprise & Cultural Services.

Members noted the content of the report circulated and presented by Mr. Paddy Doherty.

94.01. Ballybofey/Stranorlar Development Hub - Ulster Dancing Championships.

Members acknowledged that the staging of Oireachtas Rine Uladh in Ballybofey in 2016 & 2017 would generate significant 'spin -off' benefits in the local economy over the next two years, and welcomed it as a significant event for the Area.

However, they questioned the amount (estimated at € 10,000) of co-funding required from the Area D.F.I. (Development Fund Initiative) to stage the event and, felt that the possibility of seeking alternative sources of funding for the event should be explored.

94.02. Riverine Project.

Members felt that concerns about flooding in Lifford should be flagged as an issue for consideration in relation to proposed developments in the Strabane/Lifford Area which may form part of the Riverine Project.

94.03. Flooding/ Cross Border Agencies & Groups.

It was felt that the issue of flooding should form part of any on-going discussions among the various cross-border groups, and, it was agreed that a letter should be sent to Minister Joe Mc Hugh requesting that the Chair of Stranorlar Municipal District be invited to attend the next meeting proposed to take place between the Minister and cross-border representatives.

Members pointed out that there are representatives from Republic of Ireland on the Loughs Agency Committee, who as part of their role, should be asking that the Loughs Agency look at a mechanism to deal with the issue of flooding along the Rivers Finn and Foyle in a proactive rather than reactive manner.

95.00 Environmental Services.

Members noted the contents of the report circulated and presented by Suzanne Bogan, Waste Information Officer, Water & Environment.

95.01. Group Water Schemes. Members were advised that there is a Group Scheme Liason officer, based in Lifford - Ms. Doreeen Floyd- who is available to deal with queries regarding existing Group Schemes (water or sewerage) and new Schemes, but, that ultimately, all Group Schemes will transfer to Irish Water.

95.02. Septic Tanks/ Treatment Plants.

Members highlighted the fact that there is confusion among the public regarding access to Grant monies for remedial works on existing Septic Tanks. It appears that, currently, it is only in certain areas (where inspections have been carried out) that people may avail of these monies, despite the fact that, many of the public had registered their Septic Tank, (within the relevant qualifying period) in good faith, in the belief that should problems be identified with their septic tank they would be eligible to apply for the Grant when needed.

In response, the Members were advised that:

- the Grant is means tested and certain conditions apply
- The E.P.A. is the body which identifies the Areas in which inspections are to take place.
- To date about 200 inspections have been carried out in Donegal.

It was proposed that a letter be sent to the Dept seeking clarification on the implementation of the Grant Scheme, and the reasons for which an application may be refused.

95.03. Misc.

Illegal Dumping / Recycling facilities.

While acknowledging the efforts being made by the Council to curb this problem (including the use of cameras at various locations), the members felt that better use of the public media, newspapers etc. should be made to highlight the issue and to 'name & shame', those individuals indulging in this practice.

Members pointed out that there was no excuse for this type of activity as there are excellent recycling facilities throughout the County, where, waste

items such as glass, cans, textiles, batteries and electrical goods are all accepted free of charge.

There are also facilities available at these sites for the disposal of other larger, non recyclable items such as carpets etc on a 'charge per item' basis.

Glass Bottle Bank - Twin Towns.

Members requested that a possible location for a Glass Bottle Bank be identified for the Twin Towns as there is no such facility in Ballybofey/Stranorlar at the moment.

An area near the Regional Training Centre in Stranorlar was suggested as one possible location.

96.00 Roads & Transportation.

The contents of the report circulated and presented by Mr. Garrett Doherty were noted by the Members.

It was agreed that a *Workshop Meeting* to agree a programme of works for the Stranorlar Municipal Area, to be included in a prioritised Restoration Improvement Programme (RI) for the period from 2016-2018, *would be held on Friday 29th January 2015 in the Regional Training Centre, Stranorlar at 2.00p.m.*

96.01. Bridges.

Logues Bridge - Members asked if any consideration had been given to a 3rd Option at this location to re-deck the existing bridge in such a way that 2- way traffic could cross the bridge as an alternative to the two options already being considered ie:

1. To replace existing decking on the bridge - 1 way traffic.
2. Provide an off-line replacement (Re-align road) - 2 way traffic.

In response Mr. G. Doherty indicated that it would cost as much to replace the single deck bridge with a double deck, as it would to build a new bridge, but suggested that the matter could be discussed at the upcoming Workshop meeting.

It was agreed that this item would be discussed further at the proposed Roads Workshop meeting to be held on Friday 29th January 2016.

Castlefin Bridge.

The recent flooding highlighted the strategic importance of Castlefin Bridge to the economy of the Area as a whole and members urged that possible funding

for the proposed works on the Northern side of the bridge be sought at an early stage. The works proposed are a major project and will require a significant amount of funding which is beyond the resources of the Municipal District to provide. It was agreed that this item would be discussed further at the proposed Roads Workshop meeting to be held on Friday 29th January 2016.

Blackburn Bridge.

Members queried if any monies have been allocated for Phase 2 of this project or if there is any indication from the Dept that this phase will go ahead.

They re-iterated their request that the possibility of reducing the speed limit at Cappry be examined and the possible introduction of traffic calming measures from this location into the Town.

Ballindrait (Sessiagh) Bridge.

Members again raised concerns regarding the location of the parapet walls on this bridge and the possible risk of an accident occurring at this location.

Ballindrait Bridge

Members requested a full report on the bridge at **Ballindrait** - it was stated that the bridge wall is inadequate and there may be problems in relation to the weight of traffic using the bridge. It was requested that a traffic counting exercise should be undertaken at this location to identify the volume of traffic using the bridge.

Bridge at St. Johnston.

Members highlighted a possible safety hazard in relation to the bridge outside St. Johnston on the road to Carrigans - there is no wall at this location and the members requested that the possible erection of a safety barrier (or other measures to alleviate the situation) should be considered as a priority.

96.02. Misc.

The following issues were also raised by Members:

- **Footpath from The Weavers to Sessiaghoneill** - Members requested that this item be kept on the Agenda - requested design be drawn up and funding be sought for this project.
- **Pavement strengthening contract works @ Liscooley.** - Members questioned the 'timing' of these works - over the winter period. Re-

surfacing not due to take place until mid- January at least - causing problems along this stretch of National road. Members were informed that the Donegal National Roads Office had responsibility for project management of this project.

- **Footpath @ Dooneyloop** - river eating away at ground underneath footpath - potential for lots of problems here. Members were advised that the Roads Dept. has undertaken preliminary works to stabilise the road/river embankment. This stabilisation works will be monitored over the next few months to determine if further movement occurs on the embankment before replacing the footpath.
- **Storm Water** - in response to queries raised by Members, they were informed that under Roads Acts the Council has the right to allow water on a public road to enter onto land, but, landowners cannot allow water from land etc to enter onto the public roadway.
- **St. Patricks Tce, Ballindrait** - Members suggested that the Council consider constructing a wall to replace the existing railings at this location. It was felt that a wall would 'look better' and be more in keeping with the appearance of the newly refurbished foot-path.

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| 97.00 Planning & Economic Development. |
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Members noted the contents of the reports circulated with the Agenda.

97.01. Casual Trading.

It was agreed to hold a *Planning Workshop Meeting with the Members on Monday 1st February @10.00 am in the County House, Lifford* to discuss the review of byelaws to regulate Casual Trading currently being undertaken by the Planning Office.

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| 98.00 Notices of Motion. |
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98.01. - Derelict Buildings.

The following motion was submitted and proposed by Cllr. P. Mc Gowan and seconded by Cllr. Gerry Crawford.

'That the Stranorlar M.D. explore ways to encourage property owners to do up empty derelict buildings.

Members requested that this motion be taken to the Strategic Policy Committee of the Council for consideration, and, suggested that perhaps a Pilot

Scheme could be adopted which would seek to make use of (where possible) a number of derelict sites in the County.

It was acknowledged that this is a big issue for the future, particularly in rural areas, where there are a lot of empty or abandoned houses.

In our towns and villages, many of the derelict buildings, sites etc are located in, or around, the centre of the town and some could provide an ideal opportunity for re-development by D.C.C.

99.00 Correspondence.

99.01. Request from Councillor Frank McBrearty, Cathaoirleach, that the Council host a Civic Reception for Finn Harps Football Club

Members agreed unanimously that Cllr. Mc Brearty's request should be forwarded to the C.P.G. (Corporate Policy Group) for consideration. Members indicated their full support for the proposal, and, acknowledged the contribution made by Finn Harps Football Club to soccer in Donegal since it's foundation in 1954.

100.00 Members Written Questions

100.01. The following question was submitted by Cllr. P. Mc Gowan.

'What was the result of the Stranorlar MD roads condition survey and how does this compare to the other MDs in the county?'

Cllr. Mc Gowan was informed that A Visual Road Condition Rating Survey in accordance with the Dttas Flexible Roads Manual has been completed on the roads network within Stranorlar MD. This involved carrying out a visual assessment of the entire roads network before allocating a visual condition rating between 1 and 10 to each segment of road, 1 being the worst and 10 being the best condition rating. The results of the Stranorlar MD survey are provided in Table No. 1 below:

| Road Pavement Visual Condition Rating - Stranorlar MD | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Road Class | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| LP | 2% | 2% | 3% | 10% | 16% | 20% | 25% | 10% | 12% | 0% |
| LS | 4% | 9% | 8% | 13% | 21% | 19% | 16% | 6% | 5% | 0% |
| LT | 20% | 21% | 7% | 9% | 11% | 7% | 15% | 5% | 4% | 0% |
| R | 3% | 0% | 2% | 7% | 10% | 16% | 57% | 5% | 0% | 0% |

Table No. 1

The Dttas recommends that roads with a condition rating of less than 6 require surface dressing (RM) and less than 4 pavement strengthening and surface dressing (RI). On this basis on average over 60% of the non-national roads within Stranorlar MD are currently in need of either RI or RM funding. It is not possible at this time to make a direct comparison between the condition of roads in Stranorlar MD with that of other MD's as the Visual Road Condition Rating Survey has not yet been completed within other MD's.

100.02. The following question was submitted by Cllr. P. Mc Gowan.

'What funding is available to Council housing repairs in 2016, i.e. replacement windows etc.?'

Cllr. Mc Gowan was informed that the overall Housing Maintenance Budget for the Stranorlar Municipal District for 2016 is €394,768, of which €57,580 relates to payroll and associated costs, leaving a non-payroll maintenance budget of €337,188.

Included in this figure is an allowance of €85,706 in respect of additional works which have been agreed as part of the review of the Tenants' Handbook i.e. servicing windows and doors, repairs to fences and walls, painting and guttering, and maintenance works to be carried out in exceptional circumstances.

This concluded the business of the Meeting.

Area Manager,
Municipal District of Stranorlar.

Cathaoirleach,
Municipal District of Stranorlar.