

Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Meeting held on Wednesday 25th February 2015 in the Council Chamber, County House, Lifford, commencing at 10.00am.

Members Present:

Cllr Gary Doherty (Cathaoirleach)

Cllr Patrick McGowan

Cllr Gerry Crawford

Cllr Liam Doherty

Cllr Frank Mc Brearty.

Cllr Martin Harley.

Officials Present:

Joe Peoples, Director of Service, Senior Management Team

Gerry Gilroy, Area Manager, Corporate & Housing Services

Garrett Doherty, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Roads & Transportation.

Paul Christy, Senior Executive Planner, Planning Services.

Paddy Doherty, Divisional Manager, Community & Enterprise,

Martina Morris, Senior Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

30.00 Corporate Services.

30.01. Votes of Sympathy.

Members passed a vote of sympathy on the passing of:

- **Mr. Denis Mc Gonigle**, Tiernaleague, Carndonagh, a former elected member of Donegal County Council.
- **Mrs Mary Fox**, 42 Riverdale Park South, Belfast, mother of Hugh Fox, former Senior Executive Engineer, Stranorlar Roads Service.
- **Mr Hugh Mc Devitt**, father of our colleague, Seamus Mc Devitt, Roads Service, Stranorlar.

30.02. Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar meeting held on 13th January 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr Gerry Crawford and seconded by Cllr. Frank Mc Brearty the minutes of the Meeting held on 13th January 2015 were confirmed.

30.03. Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Workshop held on 13th January 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr Martin Harley and seconded by Cllr. Patrick Mc Gowan the minutes of the Workshop Meeting held on 13th January 2015 were confirmed.

30.04. Confirmation of date & Venue for next meeting.

Members confirmed that the next meeting of Stranorlar Municipal District would be held on Tuesday 7th April 2015 at 11.00 am in the Regional Training Centre, Stranorlar.

It was also agreed that a Workshop would take place on that day at 9.30 am

31.00 Housing Services.

31.01. - Housing Reports.

Members noted the reports circulated with the Agenda and presented by the Area Manager, including that the Department funding scheme for the refurbishment of vacant houses would be available this year, and that a further 34 no. submissions for funding under this heading had been made to the Dept (estimated total cost of €464,000) in respect of houses in the Stranorlar Municipal Area.

Mr Gilroy confirmed that from the beginning of the year 6 houses have been returned to the housing authority and offers of tenancy of 16 houses have been issued.

There are 53 units currently listed as vacant and these are categorised as follows:

Category	Number
Works ongoing or completed	15
At Tender or to be Tendered shortly	11
For Assessment	9
Demand low - Review over next 3 months	6
Cost Excessive - Review options including Disposal	12

31.02 Social Housing Strategy

Members were also briefed in relation to the Council's response to the Social Housing Strategy which proposes a range of mechanisms to meet the housing need including;

- A new Social Housing Capital Construction/Acquisition Programme for both the Local Authority and the Approved Housing Body Sector
- The return of vacant Local Authority units to productive use
- The lease of a no of units under the Social Housing Leasing Initiative and
- The provision of housing solutions through the Housing Assistance Payment and Rental Accommodation Schemes.

Members welcomed indications that Donegal are to receive an allocation of approximately six hundred units under the Capital Programme for delivery not alone by the Local Authority but also by the Approved Housing Body Sector, who will be primarily involved in the delivery of accommodation for clients with special needs, single persons and vulnerable groups including the elderly where care supports are necessary, such as in community group home settings.

31.03. Tenant Purchase Scheme.

In response to questions of when it was anticipated that a New Tenant Purchase Scheme would be introduced Members were advised that the Department had indicated its intention that a new scheme would be introduced shortly.

Members expressed their support for an early re-introduction of a Tenant Purchase Scheme and on the proposal of Cllr McBrearty, seconded by Cllr Crawford, it was unanimously agreed that the Stranorlar Municipal District write to the Minister of the Environment and call on him to introduce a new Tenant purchase Scheme as soon as possible.

31.04. Housing Maintenance / Tenant Handbook.

Members expressed their concern on behalf of many long-term tenants living in some of the older housing estates who were becoming frustrated by the fact that there was no funding provided to upgrade older properties, particularly replacement of windows and doors, yet new windows and doors were being put in to

houses that become vacant, and new tenants were benefitting from this. Members also indicated their belief that a lot of the problems with windows and doors stems from the Council policy of using timber-framed windows and doors, rather than PVC and it was suggested this should change. They proposed if any replacement scheme was introduced for windows and doors that PVC products should be used instead of timber.

In response Mr. Gilroy acknowledged that the concerns expressed by Members were valid and indeed supported by the maintenance staff, who are faced with many issues which need to be tackled as soon as possible. In their view the first priority is the replacement of defective roofs. This will require significant investment. However these issues can only be addressed within the resources available and it was intended that this issue would be discussed in the context of consideration of the Schedule of Municipal District Works. He also pointed out that the Department were currently providing funding to improve the insulation of the housing stock and there had been indications that this would be followed by a funding to replace defective windows & doors.

32.00 Community, Enterprise & Cultural Services.

32.01- Progress Report

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

Members congratulated and offered their support to the Youth Council for their excellent work, particularly in the area of 'Youth Mental health' and invited them to attend a future meeting of the Municipal District Committee.

Paddy Doherty indicated that he would pass on Member's comments to the members of the Youth Council.

32.02. - Riverine Project.

Members referred to the 'Riverine Project' between Strabane and Lifford and noted that applications for were now open. Members expressed their strong support for this project and asked that every effort be made by the Council to maximise the benefit of this scheme for the Lifford area.

Paddy Doherty indicated that he would be meeting with his colleagues in Strabane in the next week or so to discuss this project.

Members asked that this item be included in the regular reports to the M.D. meetings from now on.

32.03 Beltony Stone Circle

Cllr McBrearty requested an update for the next meeting in relation to his motion on Beltony Stone Circle which was passed on 30th October 2014.

33.00 Environmental Services.

33.01. Waste Charges

Joe Peoples outlined to the Members that there were two significant issues in relation to the cost of waste disposal happening which he wished to draw Members attention to;

- 1) *Pay by Weight* refuse -collection charges - this change was to have been introduced on 1st July 2015 but its introduction had now been postponed until 1st July 2016.
- 2) *Regional Waste Management Plan* - this draft plan was out for consultation to the end of January 2015 - it is to be finalised by mid-year. The Plan runs for a 6 year period up to 2021.

33.02. Flood Defences.

It was acknowledged that the replies from the OPW & the Lough's Agency had been circulated under 'Correspondence'.

Members referred to the recent correspondence from the OPW in relation to an invitation from the Municipal District Committee to send a representative to discuss issues of concern. In addition to their disappointment that the OPW had declined this invitation, Members questioned in particular their statement that "

the Finn and Foyle rivers do not fall under the statutory maintenance responsibility of the Office of Public Works”.

Members had always understood that the OPW maintain the flood defences in Lifford and asked that a further invitation issue seeking their representative to attend a future meeting and clarify their role and responsibilities in the Stranorlar area. Members also expressed their view that insufficient priority and funding was being given this area to alleviate the serious difficulties caused by flooding.

Joe Peoples stated that the O.P.W. is currently carrying out an assessment on Flood Risk Management. He advised that the Roads S.P.C and the Environment S.P.C. are now working together in relation to the issue of flooding. He agreed to contact the O.P.W. and to invite them to come along to a joint S.P.C. or plenary Council meeting to fully discuss the various issues raised by the members. In the meanwhile he would continue to engage with the Roads Directorate in order to avail of whatever monies may be available for flood mitigation works and measures from the O.P.W.

33.03. Reports requested for next meeting

Members sought that a report on the following issues for the next meeting of the Municipal District Committee;

- Ongoing the problem with illegal dumping at the old landfill site in Raphoe.
- Effluent treatment issues at Letterkenny Road, Lifford.
- Ongoing effluent treatment issues at Dromore Park, Killygordon.
- St Johnston Sewage Scheme.

34.00 Roads & Transportation.
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34.01. Draft Road Works Programme

Garrett Doherty circulated and presented his report and dealt with a number of questions raised by the Members.

Members noted that while the Restoration Improvement funding was approximately the same as in 2014 there was only 23.5 Km of the total of 866Km being addressed this year, a 37 year return period. Again the Restoration Maintenance funding was comparable with that received in 2014 but only 16.3 Km of the 866Km total is being addressed this year, a return period of 53 years. Members also conveyed their concerns that in some cases roads which had received funding over the past few years were now 'crumbling' and they questioned the quality of the material and workmanship.

Members also highlighted the need for adequate numbers of roads staff to be put in place, the need to appoint a permanent Overseer for the Area, and the appointment of a permanent Area Manager which they considered was a priority. It was also submitted that any temporary workers employed, should be from the locality so they can be in a position to respond quickly to emergency situations that may arise.

All Members present criticised the insufficient level of funding being made available and also the method of distribution of roads funding, as agreed at county level, between the five M.D. areas. They concluded that until this changed the roads in the Stranorlar Area would remain the worst in the county.

Mr Doherty advised that the Department is now requiring local authorities to carry out a 'Visual Conditioning Rating Survey' on non- National roads throughout each county and that this would facilitate Councils to allocate monies based on the condition of the roads rather than on length of roads in each area. Members confirmed they would welcome such a change and proposed that a proposal be put to the Roads S.P.C. and the Council that the future distribution of roads funding would be on the basis of the condition of the roads rather than on road distance in each Municipal District.

It was confirmed that the Draft Road Works Programme would be further considered on Friday the 6th March 2015.

34.02. Footpath & Handrail at St. Patricks Terrace, Ballindrait,

Cllr McBrearty requested an update on his Motion in relation to works to be done to the footpath, handrail etc at St. Patricks Terrace, Ballindrait, which was passed at the meeting of 1st December 2014,

35.00 Planning & Economic Development.

35.01 Planning & Economic Development.

Paul Christy presented report circulated with the Agenda which now covered the following matters;

- Summary of planning applications for the District.
- Appeals (Received & Decisions Notified).
- Significant Cases (including 'Transboundary' applications).
- Other case types [Part 8's etc].
- Unfinished Estates.

Members noted the revised format and welcomed the additional information being presented.

With reference to the current 'Carrickaduff' proposal Members noted that this is dealt with as a Strategic Infrastructure Development Application, as there were more than 25 wind turbines and the application is made directly to An Bord Pleanála. The legislation provides that prescribed bodies, which includes Donegal County Council in this case, be advised of the proposal and would be entitled to make a formal submission / observation in relation to this proposal.

The Cathaoirleach pointed out that a Special Meeting had been sought to discuss this proposal and he suggested that any discussion on this matter be deferred as until this special meeting takes place. This was agreed however Members sought full details of this proposal, and the relevant planning legislation be made available to them well in advance of the meeting in order that they might study the proposal in advance.

36.00 Notice of Motions.

36.01. - Public Park, Ballybofey.

The following motion was submitted and proposed by Cllr. Patrick McGowan and seconded by Cllr. Martin Harley.

"That this municipality supports the development and taking in charge of a planned public park in Ballybofey, as was identified last year, and, which is at planning stage at present. All legal matters to do with the land being taken into Council ownership and any other relevant matters should be given immediate attention so as not to delay this much needed facility in the Ballybofey and Stranorlar Area."

The members were informed that, the Planning Section is awaiting a response from the Planning Agent to a number of issues raised with them in relation to the planning application and the open space proposal contained therein.

36.02 - Dog Foul Bins.

The following motion was submitted and proposed by Cllr. Liam Doherty and seconded by Cllr. Patrick McGowan.

"That this Municipal District would consider the erection of 'dog foul' bins along the main walking routes in and around our towns."

The members were informed that, the Council engages with community groups in relation to the maintenance of towns and villages and receives considerable support regularly with the work of maintaining them to a high standard. The issue of dog fouling is becoming more prevalent which is disappointing and the Council would encourage dog owners to act responsibly in this regard. The Council continues to provide signage for erection by local communities and will increase monitoring levels to ensure that the situation improves. There would be a significant cost associated with the provision of collection arrangements in towns and villages and it is suggested that the policy and approach by the Council should be applied county wide to ensure consistency.

It is suggested that this might in the first instance be referred for consideration to the relevant Strategic Policy Committee (SPC).

36.03. - Footpath - Racecourse Rd to Beechwood Ave, Raphoe.

The following motion was submitted and proposed by Cllr. Frank McBrearty and seconded by Cllr. Gerry Crawford.

"I am calling on this Municipal District to begin the process of constructing a footpath from the Racecourse Road to Beachwood Avenue in Raphoe and for the Council to examine what is needed to begin this project in order to achieve a much needed amenity for the community of Raphoe. This needs to be done in order that the pedestrians that use this for leisure activity know that they are safe from traffic".

Members were informed that, from an initial desktop observation construction of a footpath at this location would appear to involve: land take, associated accommodation works and construction of approx. 230m of footpath with appropriate street lighting. The MD Roads Office can, initially prepare a scope of works and a cost estimate in relation to this motion, however, no specific funding source has been identified for construction of new footpaths in the Dttas 2015 Regional and Local Roads Grant Allocations. On this basis an alternative source of funding would need to be identified in relation to the motion.

In the mean time the Stranorlar MD Roads Office will continue to seek out all available sources of funding for such projects.

Cllr McBrearty asked that the relevant landowners be approached at an early stage.

37.00 Correspondence

37.01 - Letter from O.P.W. dated 4th February 2015.

The contents of this letter was noted and the matter discussed under the heading of 'Environment' earlier in the meeting.

37.02 - Letter from the Loughs Agency dated 12th February 2015.

The contents of this letter was noted and Members asked the Area Manager to convey the Committee's thanks for their positive response and to confirm that contact will be made to agree a mutually convenient date and time for this meeting.

38.00 Members Written Questions.

38.01. The following question was submitted by Cllr. P McGowan.

In the interest of road safety what if any work has been done to design a cycle / running lane around Ballybofey/Stranorlar and can I have information on same?

Cllr McGowan was informed that while it was acknowledged that this question was raised in the past at plenary Council level, the Stranorlar MD Roads Office has not carried out any work on the design of a cycle / running lane around Ballybofey/Stranorlar to date. The Stranorlar MD Roads Office does share the Member's concern generally in relation to interaction between pedestrians, cyclists and motorists on our roads. On this basis the Stranorlar MD Roads Office would support any effort to seek out potential sources of funding firstly to complete a scoping report to determine the feasibility/practicability of retrofitting such measure in Ballybofey/Stranorlar. If any such funding source was to become available then the Stranorlar MD Roads Office would be in a position to outline the scope of the proposal, however, the actual detailed scoping report would need to be completed by the Road Design Section. On this basis the Stranorlar MD Roads Office is happy to discuss this proposal further with Members in order to document the initial scope of the proposal.

38.02. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Liam Doherty

Does Donegal County Council intend to employ part time road maintenance workers in 2015 and when will the Roads Overseer who retired before Christmas, be permanently replaced?

Cllr. L. Doherty was informed that, the Stranorlar MD Roads Office proposes to employ a number of temporary outdoor staff to supplement the existing outdoor staffing structure. These temporary staff will be required at different times over the course of the year, however, the timing and duration of their temporary employment must be considered in the context of road works programme workloads and budgetary constraints.

The Roads Services Supervisor who retired before Christmas has been replaced on a temporary basis. This position will be filled on a permanent basis after a county wide Outdoor Staffing Workforce Plan has been established and agreed. This plan is currently being developed by the Roads Dept. in conjunction with the Human Resources Dept., Senior Management Team (SMT) and the respective Unions involved and is expected to conclude in the 4th quarter of this year.

38.03. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Frank McBrearty:

How much does it cost to run the Roads office in Stranorlar/Ballybofey on a yearly basis?

Cllr Mc Brearty was informed of the Stranorlar MD Roads Office running costs for 2014, provided by Roads Central Services were as follows:

Account Element	2014 Expenditure
Rent / Rates / Energy / Communications	€27,583.38
Indoor Staff Salary & Wages	€212,858.11
Travel & Subsistence Allowances	€8,403.39
Purchase of Equipment	€1,965.08
Printing & Stationery	€147.70
Administration Expenses - Other	€9.23
Machinery Yard Charges	€386.08
Materials & Stores Issues	€1,695.36
Other Establishment Expenses	€173.10
Other Costs & Sundries	€1,569.87
Total	€254,791.30

38.04. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Frank McBrearty;

What Council lands are available or under the Councils control in St Johnston and Lifford, that would be suitable for the construction of a playground for each area?

Cllr McBrearty was informed that Services within the Municipal District have been asked to identify any land within their ownership / control in the two locations specified which may be suitable for the construction of a playground. All sites identified will be available for a survey to be carried out to establish their suitability.

38.05. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Martin Harley;

How many applicants are on the housing waiting list for our Municipal District of Stranorlar and what is the breakdown of where there is most need?

Cllr Harley was informed that, the following is the breakdown of the 376 approved applicants by their first preference in the Stranorlar Municipal District;

Ballybofey	137
Lifford	74
Raphoe	33
Convoy	32
Castlefinn	28
St Johnston	24
Stranorlar	22
Killygordon	13
Porthall	5
Drumkeen	3
Ballindrait	3
Liscooley	1
Cloghan	1
Total	376

38.05. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Martin Harley

How many Group Water Schemes are in the Stranorlar Municipal District?

Cllr Harley was informed that, there are 67 Group Water Schemes in the Stranorlar Electoral Area, with 26 taken in charge by Donegal County Council. There are a number of applications on hand for taking in charge that the Council had been processing at the time when the responsibility for the provision of water services transferred to Irish Water.

The Council will be engaging with Irish Water in relation to progressing these applications in the context of the transition arrangements on the transfer of responsibility.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Area Manager
Municipal District of Stranorlar

Cathaoirleach
Municipal District of Stranorlar.