

Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Meeting held on Tuesday 19th May 2015 in the Council Chamber, County House, Lifford, 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

Gerry Gilroy, Area Manager, Corporate & Housing Services

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

Paddy Doherty, Divisional Manager, Community & Enterprise,

Ruth Diver, Executive Planner, Planning Services.

Martina Morris, Senior Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

Apologies : Paul Christy, Senior Executive Planner, Planning Services.

49.00 Corporate Services.

49.01. Election of Cathaoirleach.

The outgoing Cathaoirleach Cllr Gary Doherty opened the meeting and before seeking nominations thanked the members and staff for their assistance and cooperation during his term in office.

Members in turn complemented Cllr Doherty for the way in which he had performed his duties as Cathaoirleach and the efficient and effective way meetings had been conducted.

On the proposal of Cllr Martin Harley and seconded by Cllr Gerry Crawford, **Cllr Frank McBrearty** was unanimously elected Cathaoirleach of the Stranorlar Municipal District for the next twelve months.

Cllr McBrearty upon taking the Chair thanked members for this honour and stated he was looking forward to working with the members and staff during what he felt was going to be a good year for the Municipal District. He was particularly looking forward to being Cathaoirleach when the celebrations for the Anniversary of the 1916 Rising will be taking place.

49.02. Election of Leas Cathaoirleach.

On the proposal of Cllr Patrick McGowan, seconded by Cllr. Gary Doherty, **Cllr Gerry Crawford** was unanimously elected Leas Cathaoirleach for the Stranorlar Municipal District.

49.03 Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar meeting held on 7th April 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr Martin Harley and seconded by Cllr. Gerry Crawford the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th April 2015 were confirmed.

49.04. Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Workshop held on 7th April 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr. Martin Harley and seconded by Cllr. Patrick McGowan the Minutes of the Workshop Meeting held on 7th April 2015 were confirmed.

49.05 Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar meeting held on 14th April 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr. Martin Harley and seconded by Cllr. Liam Doherty the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th April 2015 were confirmed.

49.06. Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Workshop held on 1st May 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr Liam Doherty and seconded by Cllr Martin Harley the minutes of the Workshop Meeting held on 1st May 2015 were confirmed subject to the amendment to the entry regarding Water & Environment(as outlined below in Bold).

Water & Environment.

- *Ballybofey/Stranorlar Sewerage Scheme*

- *Raphoe Sewerage Scheme*
- *Convoy Sewerage Scheme*
- *St Johnston Sewerage Scheme.*
- *Castlefinn , Killygordon/Crossroads & Drumkeen Sewage Schemes.*

49.07. Confirmation of date and Venue for next Meeting.

Members confirmed the next meeting of Stranorlar Municipal District would be held on Tuesday 30th June 2015 @ 11.00 am in the Regional Training Centre, Stranorlar.

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

50.00 Housing Services.

50.01, Social Housing Reports.

Members noted the reports circulated with the Agenda and presented by the Area Manager.

50.02. Vacant Houses etc.

Members noted that from the beginning of the year **9** houses have been returned to the housing authority and offers of tenancy of **20** houses had been issued.

There were **50** units currently listed as vacant and these are categorised as follows;

Category	Number
Works complete - Allocation process	10
At Tender or to be priced shortly	20
For Assessment	0
Major repairs - review demand	6
Cost Excessive - Review options including Disposal	14

Members expressed concern that the number of vacant houses remained high and enquired as to the reasons houses were still being returned to the housing authority and if any of these had been returned due to anti-social behaviour.

In reply the Area Manager stated that past experience has been that there are many reasons for such vacancies, including the passing of the tenant. He had not to hand the precise circumstances relating to the return of these 9 houses but, this will be circulated to members for their information. He also pointed out that the rate at which houses are being returned was slowing in comparison to the past few years and this may reflect the fact that there are less privately owned houses being offered for renting at the moment.

50.03 - Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (H.A.P.)

Members welcomed the introduction of HAP in the county from 25th May 2015 which would benefit people who are currently on part-time contracts and not eligible for assistance under the Rental Supplement Scheme, or those with the opportunity to return to work who could continue to receive assistance towards their housing costs. Members also acknowledged the huge body of work involved in the operation of the HAP scheme. Some concern was expressed however that the new scheme was not a permanent solution to meeting the long term needs of all applicants for social housing.

The Area Manager pointed out that in the other housing authority areas where this scheme was introduced the Minister had made an Order requiring that the Local Authority must provide the option for all HAP applicants to also apply for a Transfer from HAP to Social Housing. The Council will therefore have to adopt a new policy for allocating Social houses which must include a provision for the transfer from HAP to other forms of social housing.

50.04 Housing - Misc.

A short discussion took place in relation to the problems encountered by separated couples applying for Social Housing. Members were concerned that someone in the middle of a separation, who may have no-where to live, cannot be approved for

Social Housing until a legal separation has taken place and matters in relation to the family home are regularised.

The Area Manager advised that the rules in relation to eligibility for social housing in such circumstances were relaxed recently (September 2014) and in circumstances where such a household would otherwise qualify for social housing assistance they may be deemed eligible for certain types of assistance (RAS & HAP) pending the issue of the family home are resolved.

51.00 Community, Enterprise and Cultural Services.

51.01. Progress Reports.

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

In relation to the Rural Development Programme/LEADER an expression of interest has been submitted by Donegal Local Community and Development Committee with a view to being the Local Action Group for County Donegal. Should the Donegal LCDC be successful in its expression of interest and subsequent bid for Leader/RDP, it would be intended to work with the existing local development companies in implementing the programme by way of detailed Service Level Agreements, which would be entered into with the relevant organisations to deliver the programme on behalf of the LCDC.

51.02. Peace IV Programme

Mr. Doherty advised that Donegal County Council is currently awaiting notification with regard to the proposed PEACE IV Programme. The Council will be holding discussions with the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) with regard to this over the coming months. He submitted that Peace IV will be an important programme for the county, following on from the extensive works carried out in all parts of the county, under the previous PEACE II and PEACE III Programmes.

The PEACE IV Programme has four key priority areas:

- 1) **Shared Education** - to increase the level of direct, sustained and curriculum-based contact between pupils and teachers from all backgrounds
- 2) **Children & Young People** - to help young people, in particular those not in education, employment and/or training (NEETs) to develop a greater understanding and respect for diversity; access new opportunities and become active citizens
- 3) **Shared Spaces & Services** - to create new shared spaces and services where people from different communities and backgrounds can come together to learn from and respect each other
- 4) **Building Positive Relations at a Local Level** - to create a society characterised by good relations and respect, where cultural identity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

The PEACE IV Programme will be an important initiative for County Donegal as we build on the achievements of previous programmes. It will assist us in achieving relevant goals and objectives as set out in our LECP (Local Economic & Community Plan).

51.03. Issues for future meetings.

Members requested that they be kept informed of developments / progress under the following headings;

- **River Links & Riverine Projects.**
- **Events planned in the Stranorlar Municipal District over the next twelve months.**
- *Funding applications made in relation to all projects in the county under headings such as Peace, Leader etc.*

52.00. Environmental Services.

52.01. Community Clean Ups.

Mr Peoples gave a verbal update to Members in relation to the huge input by various community groups and local authority staff in the recent programme of Community Clean Ups carried out in the Area. To support the efforts being made by these local groups, funding for up to 40 skips was provided by the Council, resulting in approximately 140 clean-ups being undertaken by community groups and over 40 tons of waste being collected.

He also acknowledged the amount of work done in relation to the clean-up of the County's Blue Flag beaches in recent months, again both by Council staff and with the assistance of the wider community.

Members commended the excellent the work done in the recent 'clean-ups' by the local community groups, and tidy towns committees, and also thanked the council's own staff for their assistance.

Members also asked that the Council erect warning signs / CCTV in the problem areas to discourage the public from continuing to litter these areas.

Members sought an update of the proposed joint venture between the Environment and Roads Departments of the Council to put in place appropriate safety measures for Community groups willing to undertake clean ups along entrance routes into towns & villages in the area.

52.01. Disposal of food waste

Joe Peoples advised the members that the new regulations regarding segregation of food waste would come on-stream for the towns of Ballybofey, Stranorlar and Lifford, with the introduction of Brown Bins for waste food collection in July 2015.

52.02 Flooding & other Issues.

Members enquired on progress in relation to the invitation to the Loughs Agency and the OPW to attend a meeting of the Municipal District Committee to discuss flooding issues in the Area.

The Corporate Area Manager advised that contact had been made with the representative of the Loughs Agency to identify a mutually convenient date to progress the meeting with the Municipal District Members.

Mr Joe Peoples confirmed that the proposed meeting with the OPW would be pursued as part of arrangements for them to meet with the full Council to discuss a number of issues.

Members also highlighted the issue of rubbish being dumped, into the rivers, and, along the river banks in the Area. They felt that some sort of clean-up should also be looked at/ organised to take place along the river banks.

An additional problem along the river bank in Ballybofery/Stranorlar was also identified, that of 'Japanese Knotweed'. This was also a problem in the Drumkeen area. Members requested a report on how the Council proposed to deal with this problem, as the weed seems to be spreading all along the riverbank.

52.03 Old Landfill at Raphoe

In response to a question regarding the condition of the Old Landfill at Raphoe Mr Peoples indicated the intention to arrange a meeting on site.

53.00. Roads and Transportation.

53.01. Road Works Programme.

Members noted the contents of the report circulated and presented by Garrett Doherty. The following projects were highlighted;

The first round of strengthening and surface dressing works took place in the Castlefinn RSS Area last week with 5 RI projects completed. Works are ongoing this week in the Drumkeen RSS Area with a further 5 RI projects scheduled for completion by the end of the week weather permitting. The first round of strengthening and surface dressing in the Lifford RSS area is scheduled for 15th to 26th June again weather permitting.

Initial pre appointment meetings with successful contractors for Surfacing Contracts have now commenced with a target of commencing works onsite in the coming weeks.

Two seasonal outdoor staff will commence work within the Castlefinn RSS area on the 25th May.

53.02 Bridges

Castlefinn Bridge

Contract documents are currently being drawn up in relation to proposed works at Castlefinn Bridge. It is intended to tendering the required works for commencement in the third quarter of the year with completion by year end. Members expressed their concerns regarding delays experienced to date on this project. If these works start so late in the year there is likely to be further delays due to bad weather etc.

Louge's Bridge

A report on the current structural condition and capacity of the bridge is expected later this year.

Ballindrait Bridge

The required works are scheduled to commence in the third quarter of the year with completion by year end.

Gobniscalle Bridge

Preparation of design and contract documents in relation to this project has commenced. The required works are scheduled to commence in the third quarter of the year with completion by year end.

53.03 National Primary Roads

N15 Coneyburrow Pavement Strengthening Contract 2014/15

The DNRO has advised that the final surface course layer was laid on this project last week; all outstanding remedial works are expected to be complete by the end of June.

N15 Liscooley Pavement Strengthening Contract 2015

The DNRO is currently preparing design and contract documents in relation to N15 Liscooley Pavement Strengthening Contract 2015. The works will involve laying 800m of new water main followed by 800m of pavement strengthening and surface course overlay to the existing carriageway. Works are expected to commence in the third quarter of this year with completion by year end.

Members highlighted the danger as a result of the speed of traffic passing through Liscooley, which was becoming a major issue and requested the provision of some sort of Traffic Calming measures, particularly at Donaghmore School.

N15 Blackburn Bridge Road Realignment Contract 2015

Tenders submitted in relation to this contract are currently being assessed by the DNRO. Following final assessment and the required NRA approvals procedure, a contractor will be appointed with preliminary works likely to commence on site in the third quarter of this year.

Members queried why there was no funding for pavement strengthening works at Ard Mc Carron, Ballybofey. An allocation had been made some years ago but the money was diverted to another location as the water mains required replacement before this work took place.

53.04 Public Lighting Improvements

The sum of €40,000 has been made available to the MD to provide improvements to existing public lighting. Some of the works agreed with members at a workshop on 14th April to be funded from the €80,000 received under historical development charges will now be covered by this funding. This may provide some scope to allocate funding to some additional project/s.

Members requested clarification for the next meeting in relation to the two lights which were to be erected some years ago, across from the C.P.I. centre at Castlefinn.

53.05. Other Roads Issues

Members referred to the poor condition of the road to the Lifford Athletic Club Roughan Lifford. The club were to host the Ulster Juvenile Championship next week and members requested that temporary repairs be carried out before then.

Members also requested a report for the next meeting on the provision of warning signs or other Traffic Calming measures at;

- Carnone Cross Roads.
- Approach roads to Sessiaghoneill Chapel

53.06 Attendance of Joe Mc Hugh, T.D. Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs at earlier workshop.

Members acknowledged the attendance of Minister McHugh at the Workshop Meeting earlier where they had highlighted their concerns in relation to the critical state of repair of roads in the Stranorlar Municipal District and sought his assistance in their efforts to secure a significant additional allocation for the area.

Members also asked that he support their efforts to secure a meeting with Alan Kelly T.D Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and Paschal Donohoe TD, The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

54.00. Planning & Economic Development.

54.01. Planning & Economic Development.

Members considered the report circulated with the Agenda and presented by Ruth Diver, Executive Planner.

Unfinished Estates/ Planning

Ruth Diver, Ex Planner conveyed apologies from Paul Christy and provided a verbal update on the progress in relation to 2 no. Unfinished Estates:

Members expressed their serious concerns in relation to the lack of progress in relation to both these developments and the 'taking in charge of estates' in general in the Stranorlar area. Members felt this was because adequate resources were not being deployed and this was unacceptable. They requested that the Director of Services and the Senior Planner attend the next meeting.

In reply Joe Peoples stated that there would be a comprehensive report on the take-over of estates presented next Monday at the Council meeting. He also confirmed that a process had also been agreed with Irish Water, whereby, if a Housing Estate that is already connected to the public infrastructure is taken over, then the service automatically transfers to Irish water. However, discussions are ongoing in regard to the take over of services in estates served by 'stand- alone' treatment facilities.

55.00. Correspondence.

The members welcomed the contents of letter dated 1st May 2015 received from the Minister for Housing, Planning & Co-ordination (letter circulated with the

Agenda) in which it was indicated that the Governments Social Housing Strategy 2020 includes a commitment to introduce a new Tenant Purchase scheme in the second quarter of 2015.

56.00. Members Written Questions.
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56.01. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Liam Doherty.

Which towns and old estates in this Municipal District of Stranorlar are getting there mains water supply fed through lead piping?

Cllr.L Doherty was informed that, the clinics which are now provided by Irish Water for elected members affords members the opportunity to raise issues such as this directly with Irish Water representatives. These clinics are arranged to coincide with the days when the full council meets in Lifford. Alternatively the information can be requested through the dedicated contact arrangements for elected representatives by emailing localrepsupport@water.ie.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Area Manager
Municipal District of Stranorlar

Cathaoirleach
Municipal District of Stranorlar.