

Minutes of Municipal Area Meeting of Stranorlar District held on Monday 1st December 2014 in the Council Chamber, County House Lifford, commencing at 11.00am.

Members Present:

Cllr Frank McBrearty

Cllr Patrick McGowan

Cllr Gerry Crawford

Cllr Martin Harley

Cllr Liam Doherty

Officials Present:

Joe Peoples, Director of Service, Senior Management Team

Gerry Gilroy, Area Manager, Corporate & Housing Services

Charlie Kerr, Senior Executive Engineer, Roads & Transportation.

Paul Christy, Senior Executive Planner, Central Planning Unit.

Martina Morris, Senior Staff Officer, Corporate Services

Paddy Doherty, Divisional Manager, Community & Enterprise.

Apologies:

Cllr. Gary Doherty (Cathaoirleach)

In the absence of the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Frank McBrearty, Leas Cathaoirleach, took the chair.

13.00 Corporate Services.

13.01. Votes of Sympathy.

Votes of Sympathy:

Members expressed their sympathy to Joe Peoples, Director of Services, Water & Environmental Services on the death of his father **Mr. Tommy Peoples, Moness, Saint Johnston.**

Members also expressed their sympathy to Ms Martina Morris, Senior Staff Officer, Housing & Corporate Services, on the death of her uncle **Mr. Paddy Mc Crory, formerly of Skelpy, Castlefin.**

Members also passed a vote of sympathy on the passing of;

- **Ms Diane Byrne, Annagry**, an employee of the Council in Corporate & Housing Section, Dungloe PSC
- **Michael Lafferty, Glebe, Stranorlar**, brother of Mr. Patsy Lafferty, Human Resources Manager with the Council.
- **Seamus Hegarty and Kevin Woods** who died in tragic circumstances at Crossroads, Killygordon.

A minutes silence was observed in remembrance of all of the deceased.

Cllr Harley acknowledged the messages of sympathy and support expressed by the Members and Staff following the death of his daughter Kym.

13.02 – Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar meeting held on 30th October 2014.

On the proposal of Cllr. Patrick Mc Gowan and seconded by Cllr. Gerry Crawford the minutes of the meeting held on 30th October 2014 were confirmed.

13.03 – Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Workshop meeting held on 30th October 2014.

On the proposal of Cllr Liam Doherty and seconded by Cllr Patrick Mc Gowan the minutes of the Workshop Meeting held on 30th October 2014 were confirmed subject to the amendment to the entry regarding the Salt Barn (as outlined below).

Requirement for 'Salt' Barn.

-----. Members fully supported this proposal *but also voiced their support that each Overseer would continue to retain their own storage yard.*

13.04 Confirmation of date and venue for next meeting,

Members confirmed that the next meeting of the Stranorlar Municipal District would be held on Tuesday 13th January at 11.00 am in the Regional Training Centre, Stranorlar. It was also agreed that a Workshop would take place that day at 9:30am.

14.00 Housing Services.

14.01- Housing Reports.

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

In relation to vacant houses members noted that a third submission had now been made by the Stranorlar MD area seeking funding for a further 8 houses at an estimated cost of €36,258 under Circular: Housing 11/2014 '**Returning Vacant Properties to Productive Use**'.

Total funding for 2014 confirmed under this scheme for the Stranorlar area is **€171,974**, sufficient to refurbish **32** units.

Since the beginning of the year **28** properties have been returned to the Council and **28** houses have been refurbished and offers of tenancy issued. Works are ongoing on a further 16 units at present and a further 14 units are at tender stage or will be tendered shortly. Unfortunately there remains a high level of refusal of offers made with the refusal rate on first offers at 75%.

The **57** units currently vacant are categorised as follows:

Category	Number
Works ongoing or completed	21
At Tender or to be Tendered shortly	14
For Assessment	0
Demand low - Review over next 3 months	8
Cost Excessive - Review options including Disposal	14

A lengthy discussion took place during which all members present contributed and the following issues were highlighted for follow up at a future Workshop meeting;

High Refusal Rate: Members requested that a report identifying the reasons offered by applicants when they refuse an offer be prepared for consideration at a future Workshop.

Anti -Social Behaviour: Members expressed their concern that insufficient resources were available for addressing Anti-social Behaviour and the Council's policy was not being fully implemented on the ground.

Allocation Policy: Members expressed their concern that the current Allocation Policy may in some way have contributed to this high refusal rate.

Disposal of Long Term voids: Members agreed to consider options to deal with long term voids, and in particular one bed OPD's which are in areas of low demand and not economically repairable.

15.00 Community, Enterprise & Cultural Services.

15.01 Community, Enterprise & Cultural Services.

Members noted the report circulated with the Agenda and presented by Paddy Doherty.

15.02 Balor Theatre.

Members raised the issue of the level of funding for the Balor Theatre in Ballybofey in comparison to other such venues such as the Regional Cultural Centre and An Grianan Theatre in Letterkenny. They stressed the importance of the Balor, not alone for the Municipal District of Stranorlar but also for the whole county. Members were unanimously of the view that an increase in the level of funding was warranted from Council central funds and requested that this issue be included in the discussions with the Chief Executive and the head of Finance on the 15th December.

16.00 Environmental Services.

16.01 Environmental Services.

Joe Peoples advised that arrangements for the preparation of a regular report on environmental issues were underway and he expected this would be available for the January Municipal District meeting.

16.02 Flood defences

A discussion took place in relation the absence of a strategic policy dealing with the provision and maintenance of floor defences, for example in Lifford. There was no programmed dredging of rivers and land drainage was not being overseen to ensure that other areas were not being flooded as a result. For example it had been 40 years since the river from Ballybofey to Lifford had been dredged. As a consequence Members felt, that while a lot of roads money is being spent on maintaining culverts, these are continually becoming blocked and more and more of the land along the river was being flooded regularly.

It was agreed that an invitation be sent to the O.P.W. and the Loughs Agency requesting them to send a representative to meet with the M.D. Members to discuss these issues at a future Workshop meeting.

17.00 Roads and Transportation.

17.01 Road Works Programme

Charlie Kerr presented his report which had been forwarded electronically to Members and dealt with a number of issues raised.

Members in turn expressed their satisfaction with the works carried out in the M.D. under the Road Works Programme commenting that the area had got good value for money.

Castlefin Bridge: Members were advised that works on the approach to the bridge for this year have been completed but another €80,000 - € 100,000 would need to be provided in next year's budget to complete the full programme of works on the bridge. Members confirmed their agreement that the monies for the necessary works would be allocated over a 2 year period and that the balance of funding required will be provided in next year's programme.

Traffic Volumes

Members referred to a number of routes where the volume of traffic had significantly increased, particularly the number of large vehicles now travelling along the back road from Ballybofey to Crossroads and Castlefinn. Members felt

that, this, and other roads in the area with large volumes of traffic, should be re-classified taking account of the volume and type of vehicles now using these roads.

Resources

Members recommended that the seasonal workers be engaged again next year for delivery of the road works programme.

18.00 Planning & Economic Development.

18.01 Planning and Economic Development.

Paul Christy presented the report circulated with the agenda and dealt with a number of queries raised.

18.02 Public Safety Initiative

Members noted the following progress in relation to schemes within the Stranorlar Municipal District;

Quinn Place, Ballybofey. Allocation: €9,289.

The tender process is complete and the contract is about to be awarded with a view to completion by early December 2014.

Cathedral Hill, Raphoe - Allocation: €41,851,

Council engineers are working on finalising plans.

Special Resolution Fund

The Cathedral Hill project is being led out by the 'private sector partner' and has been the subject of extensive consultation and negotiation, preliminary assessment and testing work. However they have met with obstacles beyond their control or that of the Council, which may delay the project. It is understood that numerous other Authorities around the country have encountered similar problems and delays. Mr Christy confirmed the Council is working intensively with both the private sector partners and the Department in order to ensure these projects are realised in early 2015.

Members referred to a number of other 'unfinished' estates and welcomed the proposed camera survey of the sewers in the Blue Cedars housing estate. However they were unhappy with the lack of progress being in many other locations such as in Sessiagh Park, Castlefinn, or at Townparks, Convoy. Members called on the Council to deploy additional resources in this area and to pursue funding in Bonds or Insurances and use it to address these serious problems.

19.00 Notice of Motions.

19.01. Footpath at St. Patricks Tce, Ballindrait.

The following Motion submitted and proposed by Cllr Frank McBrearty and seconded by Cllr Gerry Crawford was unanimously adopted.

"I am calling on Donegal County Council to supply funding to address the problems with drainage, hand railing and construction of a new footpath at St Patrick Terrace, Ballindrait."

Members were informed that the motion relates to a footpath in front of this terrace of houses constructed by the Council over fifty years ago. The repairs will require 90m of 6" drainage pipe to be installed and 90m of footpath (1.4m wide) to be constructed at an estimated cost of €6,000. If a handrail were to be provided (80m in length) this will cost an additional €8,000.

Given the time of year (frost) and that no budget is currently available, it was suggested, subject to member's approval, that these repairs be included for consideration in next year's Road Works Programme to be funded by Stranorlar Municipal District's own resources. If agreed this footpath work could be programmed for the milder weather in March next year.

The provision of the handrail can be considered out of the housing budget for next year and installed once the footpath works are completed.

19.02 Finn Valley Leisure Centre.

The following Motion submitted and proposed by Cllr Martin Harley and seconded by Cllr Patrick McGowan, was unanimously adopted.

"That this Municipal District Committee, ensure that the Finn Valley Leisure Centre is funded properly into the future because of its importance to this Municipal District".

Members were informed that Donegal County Council is the holder of a loan drawn down to facilitate the building of the Finn Valley Leisure Centre. Provision has been made in the 2015 Budget to cover loan charges in the sum of €38,000. This is recoupable from the Finn Valley Swimming Pool Company Ltd under the terms of the loan agreement. The Leisure Centre is managed through the company and since the facility has been operating for a short period only the situation in relation to medium and long term funding requirements is not yet clear. The Council is represented on the management company and will be working closely with the company to ensure the facility is maintained and operated efficiently.

20.00 Members Written Questions.

20.01 Outreach Services.

The following question was submitted by Cllr M.Harley.

Can we as a Municipal District be reassured that the largest population of Ballybofey and Stranorlar will continue to have their outreach service for roads into the future.

Cllr Harley was informed that: The Council has no proposals to relocate the outreach roads service in the Stranorlar Municipal District from Ballybofey/Stranorlar

20.02 Traffic Lights.

The following question was submitted by Cllr M.Harley.

Can this Municipal District supply me with the update on the 2 lights at the junction between McFeely's Brae and the Lawnsdale junction that I provided the money for 4 years ago and not any other party or party elected member has done.

Cllr Harley was informed that two street lights are to be completed at the McFeely's Bray/ Lawnsdale Junction over the next few weeks. The Light Standards had been erected for several years but could not be completed due to an existing Live Overhead ESB Line above the lights. These Live Wires have recently been

relocated and new ESB poles installed in a neighbouring landowner's land, whom has assisted the ESB and Donegal County Council to resolve this issue. The Street Light Lanterns will now be installed prior to Christmas by Airtricity on behalf of Donegal County Council. The funding for this work is being provided solely from Cllr. Martin Harley's Members Fund."

Cllr Harley acknowledged during the course of the meeting that these works have now been completed.

20.03 Housing Waiting List.

The following question was submitted by Cllr Gary Doherty.

How many people are currently on the Council housing waiting list in the Stranorlar Municipal District?

Cllr Doherty was informed there are 394 applicants currently seeking social housing in the Municipal District of Stranorlar.

20.04. Group Schemes.

The following question was submitted by Cllr Mc Gowan.

Please can I have a list of all the group waters schemes in the STRANORLAR Municipality, outlining their status, if they have active management Committees, and, has the County been carrying out repairs up till now?

Cllr Mc Gowan was informed that Donegal County Council were actively involved in the process of taking over Group Water Schemes. It is expected that the schemes will form part of the transfer of Assets to Irish Water in due course.

There are almost 1,100 Group Water Schemes in the county.

A breakdown of the present status of these schemes is as set out below:

Schemes taken over	253
Schemes yet to be taken over	389
Schemes not yet commenced	114
Schemes abandoned	315

A list of all the Group Water Supply Schemes in the STRANORLAR Municipality, showing their present status, was also provided to the member.

20.05 Street Cleaning.

The following question was submitted by Cllr Mc Gowan.

Please can I have a breakdown and explanation on Street cleaning services in all Towns, Villages in the STRANORLAR Municipality based on the 2015 adopted budget where the Cost is borne by Donegal Co Council central funds?

Cllr Mc Gowan was informed that there are two street sweeping contracts operating within the Stranorlar Municipal District.

The first contract is a fixed price contract operating within the towns of Ballybofey and Stranorlar. This sets out a weekly sweeping schedule for the towns depending on the street and has an annual cost of circa €73,000. This is currently funded from own resources and car parking charges collected within the towns (€40k/€33k).

The second contract is an hourly rate contract for street cleaning services. This service can be called out for specific instances, but is programmed as follows

Lifford - 1 visit/month - cost circa €6,000.

Raphoe - 1 visit/month - cost circa €6,000

Convoy - 1 visit/quarter - cost circa €1,500

Ballindrait - 1 visit/quarter - cost circa €1,500

Porthall - 1 visit/quarter - cost circa €1,500.

The extensive contribution of the Tidy Towns Committees in the effort to keep towns clean is acknowledged.

Currently all these costs are covered by the Stranorlar Municipal District's own resources allocations from central funds.

20.06 Castlefin Bridge.

The following question was submitted by Cllr Mc Gowan.

Please can I have a progress report on Castlefin Bridge outlining a work plan to completion and the funding source available as agreed by my earlier requests?

Cllr Mc Gowan was informed that the first phase of works are substantially complete at Castlefin Bridge. The works consist of widening the southern approach to the bridge. This section has been substantially widened, with temporary safety barriers erected. The section will be surfaced before the end of the year. Box culverts have been ordered and will be installed early in the new

year. The traffic signal will be moved once the surfacing works are complete. The cost of the current phase of works is €90,000 and is funded from a specific allocation of own resources. No funding has been allocated to carry out works beyond the current phase.

20.07 Car Park Charges.

The following question was submitted by Cllr G. Crawford.

How much has been collected in car park charges in Ballybofey over the last 12 months and how has this funding been spent?

Cllr Crawford was informed that the annual income from car parking charges in Ballybofey is circa €155,000 with VAT payments and charges etc. This provides a disposable income of €125,000.

This money is spent as follows;

Staff Charges	€50,000.
Equipment Operation/Maintenance	€15,000.
Street Sweeping	€33,000.
Local Group Contribution	€6,000.
Legal Fees (relating to fines)	€1,000.
Ballybofey area minor improvement works	€20,000.
Total	€125,000.

20.08 Road Safety.

The following question was submitted by Cllr G. Crawford.

In the interest of road safety will the council take the necessary steps to highlight the wall end on a bend on the Murlog approach to Ballindrait?

Cllr Crawford was informed that a reflector will be erected at the wall end to ensure that the wall end is visible.

20.09 Vacant Houses - Waiting List.

The following question was submitted by Cllr G. Crawford.

Will this Council detail how many families are on the Council Housing waiting list in the Stranorlar Electoral Area and how does this compare to the number of vacant houses available?

Cllr Crawford was informed that there are 394 applicants currently seeking social housing and there are 57 houses vacant in the Stranorlar area at present. The status of each house is contained in the Housing Service Report circulated with today's agenda.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**Area Manager
Municipal District of Stranorlar**

**Cathaoirleach
Municipal District of Stranorlar.**