

**Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Meeting held on Monday 29th June 2015 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

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.

**57.00 Corporate Services.**

**57.01 Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Meeting held on 19th May 2015.**

On the proposal of Cllr. Gerry Crawford and seconded by Cllr. Gary Doherty the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th May 2015 were confirmed.

**57.02. Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Workshop Meeting held on 19th May 2015.**

On the proposal of Cllr. Liam Doherty and seconded by Cllr. Patrick McGowan, the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th May 2015 were confirmed.

**57.03 Confirmation of date and venue for next meeting.**

Following a short discussion Members agreed the next meeting of Stranorlar Municipal District would be held on Tuesday 8th September 2015 @11.00am in the Council Chamber in Lifford.

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

**58.00 Housing Services.**

**58.01. Social Housing Reports.**

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

**58.02. Vacant Houses**

Members noted that from the beginning of the year **11** houses had been returned to the housing authority and offers of tenancy of **20** houses had been issued.

There were **48** units currently listed as vacant and these were categorised as follows;

Category	Number
Works complete - Allocation process	6
Works underway	17
At Tender or to be priced shortly	2
For Assessment	3
Major repairs reqd - review demand	6
Cost Excessive - Review options / Disposal	14

A short discussion took place in relation to the condition of houses offered for reallocation and in particular how properties are 'signed off' as being ready for allocation. Members referred to a number of cases raised by them in representations and also a recent 'Motion' discussed at adjourned full Council meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> June.

The Area Manager advised that as a result of the severe reduction in capital funding for the provision of new housing stock, most of this local authority's allocations are now of previously occupied properties vacated by former tenants. Many of these are 'older' housing stock. Unfortunately sufficient funding is not available to completely refurbish these older houses and bring them up to the standard of newly constructed houses. Given the restrictions on funding the

Council's priority is to ensure the house is safe, structurally sound, central heating is provided and that the insulation is upgraded.

It is also important to understand that the house provided by a local authority is a long term letting, of an 'unfurnished' rather than a furnished house. Most new tenants qualify for financial assistance through the Community Welfare Officer to assist them to furnish their new home. He confirmed that this issue will be added to the agenda for the next scheduled Workshop and that the Housing Engineer will be invited to attend.

### **58.03 - Housing Maintenance.**

Members acknowledged their support for tenants in Castlefinn and other areas who had commenced a petition to have their wooden windows and doors replaced with PVC units. They felt strongly that funding for housing maintenance of the Council's occupied dwellings needs to be significantly increased and that means that more of the income from rents needs to be retained for this purpose.

The Area Manager submitted that the Housing authority budget for maintenance of occupied dwellings is provided as part of the Budget process each year. Unfortunately the level of funding available is not sufficient to meet all requests for repairs / refurbishment of occupied dwellings. Repair requests are therefore assessed under the categories of Emergency, Urgent & Routine and prioritised accordingly. In addition he advised that the Dept are currently funding a nationwide program to upgrade insulation in Council houses. Indications have been received that once this program is completed a similar program for the upgrading of windows and doors will be introduced.

### **58.04. Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (H.A.P.)**

A short discussion took place on the merits of the HAP Scheme with Members submitting various views on its benefit.

The Area Manager gave a brief outline of eligibility for the scheme, transition from Rent Supplement Scheme to HAP and also confirmed how the 'Transfer List' for those receiving HAP will operate. Ultimately it was up to the applicant to decide whether or not to avail of HAP, which is only one of a number of forms of social housing assistance.

**59.00 Community, Enterprise and Cultural Services.**

**59.01: Progress Reports.**

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

In response to a query in relation to the Donegal Local Community & Economic Plan Mr Doherty confirmed that the Municipal District Committee will receive regular updates in relation to both elements of the plan. The opportunity for Members input will therefore be available before the plan ultimately comes before the full Council for approval

Members also requested that the Council press the E.T.B. to progress the walkway at Drumboe as quickly as possible and that engagement also takes place with Coillte to ensure this links fully with walkways in Drumboe Woods.

Members asked to be advised of the date for the proposed talk on the importance of e-commerce and use of the internet to grow a business, being presented by Mr. Niall Harding as part of the Ballybofey / Stranorlar Development Hub project.

Members expressed their continued support for the excellent work of the Youth Council.

**59.02 Beltony Stone Circle.**

Members sought a full update on this issue at the next meeting.

**60.00. Environmental Services.**

**60.01. Community Clean Ups.**

A short discussion took place in relation to how the local authority will coordinate assistance for community groups involved in various clean up campaigns around the county. Members supported the idea that these clean-ups would take place at the

same time, early each year, and wanted to know how the executive will follow up on the Motion passed at a recent Council meeting calling for all services to set aside a specific week to assist clean-ups.

Mr Peoples confirmed that a comprehensive 'game plan' will be in place next year.

#### **60.02 - Street Cleaning.**

A short discussion took place in relation to 'street cleaning' with Members suggesting a review of the time cleaning takes place and the size of mechanical equipment used to maximize efficiency. Closer cooperation with Community Employment Schemes should also be explored to ensure that all resources available are utilised to their maximum potential.

Mr Peoples advised that discussions were already taking place re: collaboration between the various bodies and the background work was already being done.

<b>61.00. Roads &amp; Transportation.</b>
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#### **61.01. Road Works Programme.**

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

Members raised a number of issues for follow up including;

- The hiring policy for Roads staff meant employees were not being appointed to local areas and therefore not readily available if urgently required.
- Members requested they be advised in advance where roads were to be closed.
- Members welcomed the erection of the new crash barrier on the Letterkenny / Convoy road.
- Review location / size of traffic bollard at junction of Hollow Rd, Castlefinn which is obstructing vision lines
- Replace Stop sign at bottom of Cappry Road which is missing
- Address flooding issues at Doneyloop - surface water from fields opposite the Chapel.
- Steeple Road (before Kilross) - section of this road is in very bad state.
- Crossroads Village - Stop sign & road markings need to be renewed.

Members also identified a number of locations requiring attention where uncut hedges were obstructing vision lines at a number of junctions including;

- At Knock & Sessiaghoneill Cross-roads
- Skelpy junction onto the Alt/ Doneyloop road
- Greenhill junction on Killygordon to Convoy road

#### **61.02. Other Roads Issues.**

Members requested an update for the next meeting on the following issues;

- Castlefin Bridge.
- Logues Bridge.
- NRA allocation for works at Ard Mc Carron.
- Footpath & drainage at St. Patrick's Tce, Ballindrait
- Public lighting at Raphoe Mart.
- Clarification regarding registration of County roads & Rights of Way.

<b>62.00. Planning &amp; Economic Development</b>
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#### **62.01 Reports.**

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

Members also acknowledged the briefing in relation to two 'unfinished estates', Blue Cedars in Ballybofey & Cathedral Hill in Raphoe.

- Blue Cedars in Ballybofey - indicated that almost ready to sign contracts for works - approx commencement date 8th July 2015.
- Cathedral Hill in Raphoe - Contractor ready to be appointed for CCTV Survey and Housing Directorate now looking after Public Safety Works.

## **62.02. Planning Issues.**

Members sought clarification of the Development Plan Policy in relation to future planning applications for developers, or agents acting on their behalf, who had not satisfactorily completed developments in the past.

<b>63.00. Members Written Questions.</b>
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### **63.01. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Patrick McGowan.**

Has the Stranorlar roads office completed the Quality roads surface study yet as part of the county wide study requested by the Dept as this study will go a long way to highlighting the very serious deterioration of roads in the Stranorlar municipal area compared to other areas of the County which receive a lot more funding annually based on road mileage not road condition?

Cllr McGowan was informed that the Stranorlar Roads Office has completed the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating Survey as requested by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. As the data collected as part of the survey was technical in nature an interpretation of the data from the survey into a more user friendly report format would be provided for members in due course.

### **63.02. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Patrick McGowan.**

Please give details of any benefits the Stranorlar municipal area receives from the Governments property tax collected to date in addition to the normal LGF fund etc, new public services or capital projects.

Cllr McGowan was informed that Donegal County Council had received funding from Local Property Tax in 2015 of €22,720,760. This was distributed in accordance with the provisions of the Budget adopted by Members on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

**63.03. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Patrick McGowan.**

What funding has the Councils Finance section made available for Street sweeping in Ballybofey / Stranorlar and the other areas in this Municipal area as agreed at the 2015 Full Council budget? Please give a full report as this questioned has been tabled a number times already this years by me directly to the Finance Director.

Cllr McGowan was informed that a figure of €23,000 was provided in the Road Works Programme for Street Sweeping for the Stranorlar Municipal District in 2015.

In reply Cllr McGowan submitted that this question had been drafted to be answered by the Finance Section and he was annoyed that the service had chosen not to answer. He suggested if this were to continue the validity of members forwarding Quesitons and Motions to the Municipal District meetings would be called into question.

**This concluded the business of the Meeting.**

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**Area Manager  
Municipal District of Stranorlar**

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**Cathaoirleach  
Municipal District of Stranorlar.**