

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE DHUN NA nGALL

Oifig Riarthóir na gCruinnithe
Aras an Chontae
LEIFEAR
19 Meitheamh, 2018

FOGRA CRUINNITHE

Beidh Cruinniú Speisialta den Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall ar siúl Dé Luain 25 Meitheamh, 2018 ag 3.00pm in **Áras an Chontae, Leifear** le plé a dhéanamh ar na hábhair atá sa Chlár leis seo.

Mise, le meas

**Seosamh O’Piobla
Riarthóir Cruinnithe**

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Office of Meetings Administrator
County House
LIFFORD.
19th June, 2018

NOTICE OF MEETING

A Special Meeting of Donegal County Council will be held on Monday 25th June, 2018 at 3.00pm in the County House, Lifford.

TO EACH MEMBER OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Dear Councillor

You are summoned to attend this meeting of the Council. The Agenda is attached.

Yours sincerely

**Joe Peoples
Meetings Administrator**

AGENDA

To consider the report of the 4th June 2018 on the Operational Review of Fire Cover in Ballyshannon / Bundoran.

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL,
HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON 25th JUNE, 2018

C/210/18 MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs S Ó Domhnaill (Cathaoirleach), L Blaney, E Bonner, C Brogan, J Campbell, P Canning, G Crawford, N. Crossan, A Doherty, G Doherty, M Farren, M. T. Gallagher, A Glackin, N Jordan, J Kavanagh, M Mc Bride, M McDermott, I Mc Garvey, P McGowan, B McGuinness, J Murray, M Naughton, J O' Donnell, J S O'Fearraigh, B O' Neill and T Slowey.

C/211/18 OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Joe Peoples, Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services / Meetings Administrator, Garry Martin, Director of Economic Development, Emergency Services and Information Systems, Joseph Mc Taggart, Chief Fire Officer, Kevin Mc Garvey, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer.

C/212/18 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs Conaghan, Mc Brearty and Mac Giolla Easbuig who were unable to attend the meeting.

C/213/18 STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE OPERATIONAL FIRE COVER
IN THE BALLYSHANNON AND BUNDORAN FIRE STATION
AREAS

The Cathaoirleach opening the meeting informed all present that photography was not permitted in the chamber and that sound recording should not take place without the prior consent of the Council. Members of the public, he said, were not permitted to speak, but there would be an opportunity after the meeting for community representatives to address and speak with the elected members.

Congratulations were extended to the following in light of their recent sporting achievements:-

- Donegal Senior GAA Football Team on winning the Ulster Final.
- Donegal Senior Hurling Team on winning the All Ireland Nicky Rackard Cup Final.

- Donegal Senior Ladies GAA Football Team on winning the TG4 Ulster Senior Title.

C/214/18 VOTE OF SYMPATHY

Cllr Jordan extended sympathy to Francie and Francis Doherty on the death of their son Dean.

C/215/18 STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE OPERATIONAL FIRE COVER IN THE BALLYSHANNON AND BUNDORAN FIRE STATION AREAS

Mr Joseph Mc Taggart , Chief Fire Officer gave a detailed presentation on the strategic review of the operational fire cover in the Ballyshannon and Bundoran Fire Station areas. This included background information, the extent of staff and management engagement, together with details in relation to the appointment of the Management Consultant ORH Ltd. Mr Mc Taggart outlined the principles which had underpinned the review and the key deliverables requested. The review, he added, had been based on specific datasets, a defined methodology, with provision for future service demand and a premises risk analysis and impact statement. Future options for fire cover in Ballyshannon and Bundoran were determined to be:

1. Two new stations at their optimum locations with one pump in each.
or
2. One merged station at its optimum location with two pumps.

Members were informed that the preferred option on the basis of the independent review carried out by ORH and the professional judgement of the Fire Service, was for a single merged station housing two pumps, two jeeps and an aerial appliance covering both Ballyshannon and Bundoran.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Deputy Marc Mac Sharry to the meeting and reminded members prior to the commencement of the

debate that there was no special privilege in the chamber and that all commentary made was in the public arena.

Cllr O' Neill thanked all who had accommodated the holding of this Special Meeting for what was a matter of great importance for the people of Ballyshannon/Bundoran. He alluded to the fact that members of the Fire Service in both areas had been informed that there would be no reduction in staffing numbers. This, it was acknowledged, was not in keeping with comparator fire station areas where the crewing levels for a 2 pump 1 aerial appliance base was 15 in total. There was no evidence either, he said, that the Department had at any time advocated the closure of either station. Addressing the Director of Service and the Chief Fire Officer, he said that the members of Donegal County Council could not in any form accept a reduction in fire service cover in the aforementioned areas.

He queried the costs involved in producing the report as the initial briefing had been that outside expertise was required to assess fire service cover in Ballyshannon / Bundoran and that all had been in agreement that the approach would be to go where the evidence led. The recommendation before members, he advised, was clearly the preference of Fire Service Management and supposedly evidence based, yet a feasibility study had not been provided and ORH had not, when identifying alternative locations, taken into account the suitability of land on which to build the stations.

Cllr O' Neill alluding to ORHs recommendation that two pumping appliances be maintained , at either two stations or one merged location stressed the fact that even with the constraints and criteria applied it was not possible to recommend one option over the other.

Analysing the data in relation to response times, Cllr O' Neill said that the evidence clearly pointed to the fact that the two station option was the most sensible approach.

It was noted that there was no reference in the ORH report to planned retirements and the staffing complement going forward.

At this juncture Cllr O'Neill circulated a map outlining the proposed locations for Ballyshannon and Bundoran Fire Stations together with the proposed merger location. It was clear, he said, that the Ballyshannon Fire Brigade fire ground cover did not include the second back-up fire ground cover to Donegal Town and the Chief Fire Officer's recommendation was unsafe as it did not take into account the health and safety risk analysis. He queried also whether there had been any consultation with the HSE in relation to the new Primary Care Centre in Ballyshannon and with Fire Service personnel in Donegal Town and in Beleek.

Cllr O' Neill asked the Chief Fire Officer to withdraw his recommendation and called on the Council to take a vote so as to refute his proposal for a merged station at a location between Drumacrin and the Finner roundabouts at Bundoran. This was seconded by Cllr Campbell.

Cllr Campbell said that back in 2015 the preferred option had been for two stations and asked what had changed in the interim to amend this decision.

He asked if the underlying principles were accurate and based on the minutes of the meetings that had taken place, as same had not been agreed with the staff in question. He requested that the minutes of the meetings between Fire Service management and ORH be made available. Cllr Campbell proceeded to raise the following issues:-

- Whether KCS was national policy and if so how it could be disregarded in this instance.
- That there was no clear recommendation from ORH.
- Whether ORH had come and presented the findings in person.
- Why a business case has not been prepared.
- Whether the report had been paid for, the final cost and if the final cost included fire fighters time. Details were requested in relation to any other ancillary costs and additional travel undertaken.

- Need for detail in relation to the verification sheet and subsequent discussion of same at all relevant meetings.
- Whether there were draft versions of the report. Copies if available were requested.
- Clarification needed as to who had made the decision in relation to the merged facility and whether or not it had been a collective decision of the Fire Services Management team.
- Detail requested as to why the 2nd Pump response times into the combined area were a positive for the merged station.
- Whether appliance proximity to Risk Premises in the review areas was based on fact given that there was a slightly higher risk potential in the Bundoran area.
- Query as to whether or not a risk calculation had been carried out with regard to locating an aerial appliance at the merged station and if cognisance had been taken of the fact that this could eventually become a ten crew facility. It was noted also that the statistics did not add up in terms of providing an aerial platform at the merged location.
- Clarification needed as to why a merged station was the better option in terms of attending “Life at Risk Incidents”.
- What had changed given that in the period 2012-2015 the preferred option of Fire Services Management was for two stations.

Cllr Naughton expressed concern that in determining the optimum level of fire cover for Ballyshannon and Bundoran the report had considered only the requirement for pumps with no reference to the need for aerial appliances.

He noted that ORH in its report had not effectively recommended one option over the other and queried what had changed to amend the two station policy that had been advocated for so long by the Council. People on the ground needed to be consulted, he said, and clarification provided to show that a merged facility would not give rise to increased turnout times for Fire Fighters. He proposed that the Executive draw up plans for a two pump station in both Ballyshannon and Bundoran and that representation be made to the

Minister in relation to funding for both facilities including the location of an aerial appliance.

Cllr Jordan welcomed a number of concerned citizens from the South Donegal area to the chamber. He said that the proposal by Cllr Naughton did not reflect what had been agreed by the Donegal MD members at their recent workshop.

He would, he confirmed, be happy to send the ORH report to the Department as it was clear from the evidence that a merged option would lead to increased response times and could lead possibly to the loss of life. Reference was made to a similar situation in Co Longford and a query raised as to what business case had been put to the Department to secure two new stations in that jurisdiction.

Thus he seconded the proposal by Cllr O' Neill to refute the recommendation made by the Chief Fire Officer and to accept the proposal as agreed by the members of the Donegal MD for two Fires Stations one in Ballyshannon and one in Bundoran

Cllr Murray in his capacity as chair of the Environment and Emergency Services SPC commended the members who had contributed to the debate. He said that he could not endorse anything that would lead to increased response times or a diminution in service provision.

The Cathaoirleach said it was clear that the unanimous decision of the elected members was for the retention of two fire stations one in Ballyshannon and the other in Bundoran.

Cllr O' Neill at this juncture called for a recorded vote.

Mr Joe Peoples, Meetings Administrator said that a recorded vote would be taken initially in relation to Cllr O' Neill's proposal refuting the recommendation of the Chief Fire Officer for a merged station at a designated location in Ballyshannon/Bundoran.

A recorded vote resulted in 22 members voting for the proposal with none voting against.

These voting in favour of the proposal were:

Cllrs Blaney, Bonner ,Brogan, Campbell, Crawford, Crossan, A Doherty, Farren, Gallagher, Glackin, Jordan, Kavanagh, Mc Bride, Mc Garvey, Mc Gowan, Mc Guinness, Murray, Naughton, Ó Domhnaill, Ó Fearraigh, O’ Neill and Slowey.(22)

The motion was thus unanimously agreed.

The Cathaoirleach said that members now needed to consider the recommendation from Cllr O’ Neill recommending,

1. The building of two new Fire Stations as per option 1 of the ORH report and the ,
2. Forwarding of same to the Department together with a commitment from the Council that a contribution in funding be made.

He informed members that funding options were a matter for discussion at budget time and proposed instead that a deputation be selected to meet with Department officials to discuss various funding options. This was seconded by Cllr Albert Doherty.

The Chief Executive said that the Executive were happy to proceed as directed by the members, but cautioned against the utilisation of co-funding. He highlighted the fact that there were budgetary constraints in place which prevented the Council from pursuing this option.

Cllr O’ Neill called again on the Council to step up to the mark and provide the relevant funding as a gesture of goodwill. There were, he contended, monies available, arising from the old Town Council legacy.

Garry Martin, Director Economic Development, Emergency Services and Information Systems confirmed that €6.8 million had been provided in the current Fire Service Revenue budget and noted that the Fire Service Capital Programme was fully funded by the Department.

Cllr Campbell asked for additional clarity and said that back in October, 2017 that he had sought specific information relating to the draft S.26 Plan and that he was now asking that this

information be provided, pursuant to Section 136(1)(a) of the Local Government Act, 2001 as amended.

He asked that a response be provided in respect of the items requested together with information in relation to the following:-

- All “Risk Based Analysis” documentation/ reports including all Arcs and Isochronal mapping.
- Minutes of the meeting between Fire Service Management and ORH.

This was duly proposed by Cllr Campbell and seconded by Cllr Jordan. He asked also that a public meeting be held with ORH.

Cllr Jordan asked whether a new steel hydraulic platform would be covered by the Department.

After some debate on the final wording of the proposal due to issue to the Minister it was resolved on the proposal of Cllr Naughton, seconded by Cllr O’ Neill that the Department be contacted in relation to the provision of funding for two number two bay Fire Stations in Ballyshannon and Bundoran (and that a request be sent to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to receive a delegation from the Council.)

This concluded the business of the meeting.