

Minutes of the December Monthly Meeting of Athlone Town Council, which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 6.00p.m. on Monday 7th December, 2009.

Attendance:

Mayor: Cllr. M. Cooney

Members: Cllrs. S. Buckley Byrne, J. Henson, P. Hogan, G. McFadden, K. Molloy, K. Moran, A. O'Rourke and A. Shaw.

Officers: Mr. Danny McLoughlin, County Manager
Mr. Barry Kehoe, Director of Services
Mr. John Walsh, Town Clerk
Mr. Alan Kelly, Town Engineer
Ms. Anne McNamara, Assistant Staff Officer

Vote of Congratulations:

All the Members concurred with Cllr. Hogan's vote of congratulations to the Garrycastle Senior Football Team and the Tubberclare Intermediate Football Team on reaching the Leinster Finals. It was the 14th Garrycastle team to do so, in its 39 year history and although both teams lost their matches, it was a great achievement for them.

Minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr. Moran,

Seconded by Cllr. Henson and resolved,

"That we hereby confirm and adopt the Minutes of the November Monthly Meeting which was held on November 2nd 2009".

Matters arising from the Minutes:

In response to Cllr. Moran's query the Town Engineer stated that the tree in John Broderick Street would be examined by a tree surgeon and would be taken down as soon as a tree-felling licence is received.

The Town Engineer informed Cllr. Hogan that a cowl has been ordered for the lights at Dunnes Stores in Irishtown.

The Director in response to Cllr. Buckley Byrnes query, stated that the committee examining the waiver system had met and put its proposals in writing to the County Manager. It will be meeting with him in the near future.

Progress Report on Flooding Issues:

The Director circulated a statement and presented it to the Members. It outlined the major response effort which has been taking place since the first incident in Leinster Terrace and The Villas on November 17th, up to the present. Approximately 90 houses had been flooded and a further 70 affected by the flooding, together with roads, businesses, farm buildings and land. The public water supply had not been affected. According to the OPW the river level peaked on November 28th and has been declining slowly since then, but it is estimated it will take another week for the flooded areas in town to clear.

The overall response has been managed by a Flooding Coordination Group comprising of the Local Authorities, the Garda Siochana, the H.S.E., the Defence Forces, Flood Relief Centre, and St. Vincent de Paul and it met on a daily basis from November 24th to December 3rd and now meets as required.

A sub-group has now been formed to manage the recovery phase and it consists of the Garda Siochana, the H.S.E., the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Athlone Flood Relief Centre and is chaired by the Council. It will meet as required to ensure that all the recovery activities and resources are delivered in the best possible way.

The Town Engineer has commenced the clean-up operation. The Council will clean up all public areas and remediate the 9no. Council owned houses that were flooded, will remove all sandbags, dispose of flood damaged goods and provide cleaning materials to affected areas, free of charge. To date the Council has assisted 37 families, 35 availed of B&B in local hotels etc. 15 of these are now accommodated in medium term housing and it is hoped the remaining 20 households can also be accommodated in the near future.

The Director stated that an Information Meeting was going to be held for owner/occupiers of flooded houses, in the Shamrock Lodge Hotel on Tuesday, December 8th to give people as much information as possible regarding the recovery operation. He said that the transport service being provided by the Army will continue for the present.

He added that this incident has highlighted the need for flood defences in vulnerable areas of the town and the Council will carry out a study of this flood and its impact and will work with the Office of Public Works to determine the feasibility of flood defences. This process will commence in January 2010.

The County Manager expressed his thanks to the Council staff and the other Agencies for the support given and to the very significant voluntary support. He said all must work together to synchronise the clean-up operation and it would be good to meet with individual residents associations. He said the Government has provided €10m to assist Local Authorities and we have until December 18th to claim. He added that an analysis of flood defences is now needed.

Cllr. McFadden asked if defences could be erected at the back of Deerpark and if Mick McQuaids Bridge could be re-constructed, but the Town Engineer said that the Bridge would

have no effect on flooding. The Director said that the area south of Deerpark will be examined.

All the Members queried how the clean-up would proceed and the Councils role in it. The Director said the Council would provide skips, dispose of sandbags and goods damaged by floods, disinfect public areas, cleanout sewers, control vermin, repair roads and provide cleaning materials to those affected.

Cllr. Moran thanked the County Manager, Director of Services, Town Clerk, Town Engineer, Edel Martin, Pat Hession, Danny O'Neill and all the staff involved since the flooding began. He said our own Team headed by the Town Engineer should investigate the flooding and devise a plan for the future. He asked that it be placed on the Agenda for the January meeting. The Manager responded saying that we would have a Team headed by the Town Engineer and we will liaise with the O.P.W. to put together a package of worthwhile measures and then present them to the government for funding. Cllr. Moran also thanked Mr. Paddy McCaul, owner of the Shamrock Lodge Hotel, who made his carpark available for the filling sandbags.

Cllr. O'Rourke gave an update on the Flood Relief Centre stating that 300 food hampers and fuel had been delivered to affected homes. There are 80 volunteers and goods are continuously being received, with a 20,000 sq. ft. building already packed to capacity. They have collected €15,000 so far and a committee has been established to distribute the aid. He thanked the public for their generosity and thanked the volunteers, the Council, Army, Gardai, Civil Defence, St. Vincent de Paul and Relief Centre.

The Director again thanked everyone involved but said it was an ongoing process.

Report on Taxi Ranks:

The proposals to amend the Athlone Appointed Stands (Street Service Vehicles) Bye-Laws 1999 were circulated and the Town Clerk outlined their effects as follows:

- 1) The number of taxi rank spaces on public roads will increase from 21no. to 39no.
- 2) The use of certain loading bays as taxi ranks between 7p.m. and 7a.m. will be allowed.
- 3) The Council will be able to provide for designated temporary taxi ranks when required.

He stated that one submission had been received from the Athlone Taxi Federation and they indicated their full support for the proposed amendments, particularly the use of the loading bays. He recommended making the amendments as proposed.

Cllr. Moran welcomed the proposed changes and thanked the Town Clerk for his input. He asked if the Taxi Regulator had met with the Council and the Town Clerk confirmed that they have met with Consultants hired by the Regulator, who were preparing models for use and the determination of best practice regarding taxis.

It was proposed by Cllr. Moran,
Seconded by Cllr. Henson and resolved,
“Pursuant to the provisions of the Road Traffic Acts 1961-2002 and in particular Section 15 of the Road Traffic Act 2002 we hereby amend the Athlone Appointed Stands (Street Service Vehicles) Bye-Laws 1999 in accordance with the circulated Report and Schedules”.

Civic Reception:

It was agreed to host a Civic Reception for the Soroptimist Club in May 2010 on the occasion of their North/South Conference in Athlone.

Overdraft Accommodation:

It was proposed by Cllr. Molloy,
Seconded by Cllr. Buckley Byrne and resolved,
“Pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Acts 1925-2001, we hereby approve of the borrowing by means of temporary overdraft accommodation in the sum of €3m in respect of the half year ending June 30th 2010”.

Taking in charge:

The Members welcomed the proposal to take Hazelwood/Rindoon in charge.

It was proposed by Cllr. Moran,
Seconded by Cllr. Shaw and resolved,
“Pursuant to the provisions of the Roads Act 1993 and the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2006, we hereby approve of the commencement of the process to take the roads and services in the Hazelwood/Rindoon Estate in charge”.

Conferences:

The Members noted the location and cost of the following conferences:

Sligo	–	AMAI Spring Seminar	–	February 12 th /13 th 2010
Letterkenny	–	21 st Colmcille Winter School	–	February 26 th – 28 th 2010

Managers Orders:

The Members noted the summary of Managers Orders as circulated.

Presentations:

The Town Clerk informed the Members that the Midland Regional Authority would give their presentation at the January Monthly Meeting and the Midlands Drug Task Force would give theirs at the February Meeting.

A.C.T. wish to meet with the Members and it was agreed to meet them prior to the preliminary Budget meeting at 5.30p.m. on Tuesday 5th January 2010.

Seasons Greetings:

The Mayor thanked his colleagues, the Executive, staff and Media for their support and courtesy throughout the year and he wished all, particularly those on duty over the Christmas, together with the Defence Forces overseas, a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

This concluded the business of the meeting.
