

Minutes of the March Monthly Meeting of Athlone Town Council, which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 6.00p.m. on Monday 2nd March, 2009.

Attendance:

Mayor: Cllr. E. Moran

Members: Cllrs. A. Berry, J. Butler, M. Cooney, R. Lennon, P. Hogan, K. Molloy, K. Moran and and M. O'Connell

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

Votes of Sympathy:

All the Members wished to be associated with votes of sympathy to the families of the recently deceased Mary Carroll, Connaught Street and Peter Tone, who had worked for the Council for many years.

Minutes:

It was proposed by Cllr. K. Moran,
Seconded by Cllr. Cooney and resolved,
"That we hereby confirm and adopt the Minutes of the February Monthly Meeting which was held on February 2nd 2009".

Matters arising from the Minutes:

The Town Clerk confirmed for Cllr. Cooney that a presentation on Water Services will take place before the next meeting at 5.30p.m.

Cllr. Lennon expressed the opinion that his motion on the Fr. Matthew Hall at the last meeting had not conflicted with Standing Orders. The Mayor stated that his ruling was final.

The Town Engineer informed Cllr. O'Connell that the ESB had installed a light on the town side of the Coosan underpass, but were not in favour of installing a light in the underpass itself. The ESB have also been paid for the lighting at Wolfe Town Terrace, so they should be installing it soon.

The Town Engineer confirmed for Cllr. Hogan that work on the facias and soffits of the OPD's in John Paul Park will be undertaken next month and that there is money available in the Block Grant for the turning bay there.

Cllr. Butler thanked the Department of Education for their prompt action in cutting the hedge.

Cornamagh Local Area Plan:

The Town Clerk presented the Draft Cornamagh Local Area Plan which hopes to establish the framework within which the provision of housing, services, transport links, employment and infrastructure are appropriately co-ordinated for sustainable development. He outlined the exact area covered by the Plan and existing land uses, mainly residential, agricultural and recreational and described it as an urban edge site, bounded by other LAP's at Cornamaddy, Lissywollen and Lissywollen South. He showed a map outlining the proposed road network and bus route options. The primary route going from Cornamaddy to the Coosan Road with link routes to the 2 mile at Coosan Church, the Glen and the Ballymahon Road. The proposed open space includes a linear park (including playing fields) measuring 3.3 hectares, an amenity area of 1 hectare and pocket parks measuring 0.8 hectares and 15% of each residential development must be reserved for open space. The zoning he said would be mainly residential and community space and is broadly divided into 5 Development Cells with varying densities from low to medium to high. It is proposed to provide local shopping centre at Ballymahon Road, the Northern Boundary and south of Coosan Church, where it is also proposed to build a crèche. Provision had also been made for community facilities and a school north of Coosan Church. The Town Clerk recommended proceeding with the Plan.

The Members welcomed it and its positivity.

It was proposed by Cllr. K. Moran,

Seconded by Cllr. Cooney and resolved,

“Pursuant to the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006, we hereby approve of the commencement of the public consultation process by advertising the Draft Local Area Plan for Cornamagh”.

Traffic Calming Measures – Clonbrusk:

The Director informed the Members that W.C.C. has completed the Part 8 planning process for traffic signals at the junction of the Ballymahon Road and the Cosoan Road. He said the proposal provides for the closure of the western end of the service road by means of bollards at its junction with the Coosan/Two Mile Road to prevent access and egress to the junction. The houses along this service road will be accessed from the eastern end and a turning bay will be provided at the western end for local traffic to turn and exit. He requested Members approval to commence the public consultation process.

The Members welcomed the proposal and hoped the work would be done soon as it was a long time since measures were first sought. On asking about details such as yellow boxes, pedestrian sequence in the lights and more road markings, the Director said he would be able to tell them more at the Area Meeting on the 19th March, 2009. In response to Cllr. K. Moran, he said it is hoped the work will be undertaken by the Council's own staff.

It was proposed by Cllr. K. Moran,
Seconded by Cllr. Molloy and resolved,
“Pursuant to Section 38 of the Road Traffic Act 1994, we hereby approve of the commencement of the public consultation process for traffic calming measures at Clonbrusk”.

Appointed Stands – Taxi Ranks:

The Town Clerk presented a Report on the Taxi Ranks in the town. He said there were a total of 30 stands and this included 12 private spaces. On advertising and seeking submissions from the public in regard to the need, number and location of taxi-ranks, 2no. submissions were received. One from Cllr. Keena who asked that a rank be provided at the City Link Bus Stop in Arcadia and one from The Taxi Federation. They sought ranks to be provided at the Palace Bar on Barrack Street, on Main Street or Bastion Street and on Connaught Street. They suggested that all newly proposed loading bays be used as taxi ranks at night and requested a proper public transport system be in place for major events such as the Triathlon and the Community Games.

The Town Clerk stated that the Council recognised the need for additional ranks, due to the escalation in taxi numbers, but not to the point where they dominate the limited street parking spaces available. The dual use of loading bays for commercial deliveries and taxis on a time share basis is legally possible provided that particular hours are specified for each use and that the uses do not overlap or occur simultaneously. The report suggested where loading bays are designated for dual use, they will be “loading bays” from 8a.m. to 8p.m. and as “taxi ranks” from 8p.m. to 8a.m. and that signage and road markings will indicate this. Mr. Walsh said that the road at the City Link Bus Stop at Arcadia is not sufficiently wide, but that there is a taxi rank for 6no. vehicles 60m away in the Arcadia Business Park.

The following recommendation was made:

The following locations and taxi vehicle numbers per rank as set out in the Schedule hereunder are recommended for your approval and inclusion in the Bye-Laws of 1999 by means of an amendment which must be placed on public display for 6 weeks.

Schedule of Appointed Stands:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Vehicle numbers</u>
1) Church Street	6no.
2) Barrack St	2no.
3) Southern Station Road	9no.
4) Sean Costello St	3no.
5) Athlone I.T.	3no.
6) St. Mary’s Place	3no.
7) Connaught St	1no.

Loading Bays – 8.00p.m. to 8.00a.m.

8) Connaught St (east)	2no.
9) St. Peter’s Square (Palace)	2no.
10) Main St (Castle Bar)	2no.
11) Custume Place	2no.
12) Church Street (Church of Ireland)	2no.
13) Mardyke St (Kilroys)	<u>2no.</u>

Total 39no.

This proposal represents an increase of 21no. taxi vehicle spaces over the current approved number and when combined with the Private Ranks gives a total of 51no. taxi vehicle spaces.

The Members welcomed the Report though expressed disappointment at the Taxi Regulators continued failure to provide the number of taxis operating in the town. Cllr. K. Moran expressed his thanks to the executive for consulting with the Taxi Federation and he thanked Mr. Paddy Callaghan for his work. Following further discussion, it was agreed that the loading bays should be used for deliveries from 7a.m. to 7p.m. and for taxis from 7p.m. to 7a.m. and on Sundays.

It was proposed by Cllr. Moran,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

“Pursuant to the provisions of the Road Traffic Acts 1961-2002 we hereby approve of the initiation of the process to amend the Athlone Appointed Stands (Street Service Vehicles) Bye-Laws 1999 and the inclusion of 39no. taxi spaces at the 13no. locations listed above”.

Joint Policing Committees:

The Town Clerk informed the Members that the Joint Policing Committee would be made up of all 9 Members and the statutory nominations of Supt. Aidan Glacken, Insp. Nicholas Farrell, Barry Kehoe, John Walsh, Anthony Mimmagh, Michael Cunniffiee, Linda Joe Quinn and three of the following four, Deputy Mary O’Rourke, Senator Nicky McFadden and Deputy Willie Penrose.

It was proposed by Cllr. Cooney,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

“We hereby accept and approve the nominations for the J.P.C. and agree to hold the first meeting on Friday 20th March, 2009 at 5p.m. in the Civic Centre”.

Block Grant 2009 Expenditure Proposals:

The Town Engineer informed the Members that the amount of the Block Grant is the same as last year, €81,000 and he circulated his proposals for its expenditure.

The Members welcomed the proposals and agreed that the money was being evenly distributed throughout the town.

It was proposed by Cllr. Molloy,

Seconded by Cllr. Cooney and resolved,

“Pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Acts 1925-2001 and the Roads Acts 1993-1998, we hereby approve of the expenditures of the Roads Block Grant 2009 as set out hereunder:

Carriageway Restoration

1. Cypress Gardens (71 to 81)	(Bitmac)	€ 30,000.00
2. Altown	(Bitmac)	€ 15,000.00
3. Coosan West Road – Curley’s corner to Clonbrusk West	(Bitmac)	€ 40,000.00
4. Bowerview	(Bitmac)	€ 15,000.00
5. LS 14751 Cornamagh	(Surface Dressing)	€ 6,000.00
6. Carrick O’Brien Road	(Surface Dressing)	€ 30,000.00
7. Coosan Point Road (2-Mile junction to Bog Rd)	(Surface Dressing)	€ 25,000.00

Junction / Road Improvements / Traffic Calming Measures

1. 3 no. Speed Tables at Brawny access road (Replacement for Speed Cushions)	€ 15,000.00
2. 3 no. Speed Tables at Beechpark/Beechpark West	€ 10,000.00
3. Zebra Crossing at Connaught St.	€ 15,000.00
4. Zebra Crossing at Coosan Pt. Road	€ 15,000.00
5. Turning area at John Paul Park	€ 10,000.00

Footpath Improvements

1. Footpath Replacement Glenavon Tce.	€ 20,000.00
2. Footpath replacement from 79 - 89 Retreat Park	€ 40,000.00
3. Footpath replacement 137 – 140, 18 – 19 Auburn Hts	€ 20,000.00
4. Footpath replacement 1 – 6, 12, 31 Hillcourt	€ 15,000.00
5. Footpaths in Cypress Gardens	€ 10,000.00
6. Footpath replacement 30 – 38 Altown & sections at Garrycastle	€ 25,000.00
7. Kerbing and footpaths (Coosan West Road)	€ 25,000.00
8. Footpath replacement at Arcadia	€ 15,000.00
9. Footpath replacement at Westlodge	€ 5,000.00
10. Footpath replacement and dished crossings Central Tce. to Hospital	€ 10,000.00
11. Footpath replacement at Mayfield Grove	€ 20,000.00

Westside Regeneration Project

2009 Contribution to Phase 1	€ 150,000.00
Total	€ 581,000.00

Public Lighting 2009 Expenditure Proposals:

The Town Engineer circulated his proposals for the expenditure of €50,000 in 2009 in five areas and the Members welcomed them.

It was proposed by Cllr. Butler,

Seconded by Cllr. Cooney and resolved,

“Pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Acts 1925-2001, we hereby approve of the following expenditure in 2009 on public lighting:

1. Retreat Park

Installation of 10 No. 100W SON Lanterns (6 as replacements for 55 W Lanterns, 3 onto existing poles and 1 onto new 6 metre lighting column.

Total	€ 10,300.00
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2. **Woodlands Grove** (Pedestrian Underpass)

New 6 metre Lighting pole + connection € 1,500.00

3. **Willow Park**

Continuation of upgrading of existing lights
(63 no. this year) € 13,550.00

4. **John Broderick St.** (Dunnes Stores)

Installation of 7 no. new decorative lights
at John Broderick St. € 24,000.00

5. **Arcadia** (Junction with Rear Access Road)

New 150W SON Lantern onto existing timber pole € 650.00

Total € **50,000.00**

Pedestrian Crossing at Cornamaddy:

The Director informed the Members that he was still awaiting road safety audit, but the need for another crossing in the area is being examined and he hoped to have more details for the Area Meeting on March 19th.

The Members felt a controlled crossing should be installed at the School immediately as the Principal had expressed concerns over the safety of the children. They also felt there should be a signed Right turn into the Orchard. The Director informed them that no zebra or pelican crossing ever existed there, just dropped kerbs and tactile paving as it is now. He said permission would have to be sought from the NRA for a controlled crossing, but the Members felt something should be done as a matter of urgency. The Director said he would have a Report for them on March 19th 2009 at the Area Meeting.

Managers Orders:

The Members noted the summary of Managers Orders as circulated.

Questions:

Question 1 Cllr. K. Molloy:
“Has this Council received details of new leasing arrangements for Social Housing?”

Answer: **The details were received last week and are being circulated to the Members.**

Question 2 Cllr. J. Butler:
“When will traffic calming measures be replaced at Baylough?”

Answer: A detailed design for this scheme is currently being prepared by the Transportation Section of Westmeath County Council and this will be circulated to the Members of Athlone Town Council on completion.

Question 3 Cllr. J. Butler:
“When will the bins be removed from Custume Place?”

Answer: Alternative locations are being sought.

Question 4. Cllr. R. Lennon:
“When will Athlone Town Council be putting in place the proposed pedestrian crossing at Connaught Street?”

Answer: This pedestrian crossing is included in the expenditure proposals for the 2009 Block Grant and if the proposal is adopted by the Members the work will be completed in the current year.

Question 5. Cllr. R. Lennon:
“Has the Council a timeframe for the upgrade works to be carried out at College Park?”

Answer: A brief has been given to the N.B.A. and proposals will be available within 6 weeks.

Question 6. Cllr. K. Moran:
“Can this Council erect a railing or a sign to make people aware of the high step onto the road at O’Neill’s on Pumphouse Lane?”

Answer: The matter will be examined by the Town Engineer.

Question 7. Cllr. K. Moran::
“Can this Council repair the manhole cover outside Dr. McCormack’s Surgery?”

Answer: This manhole is part of the snag list to be completed by the contractor for the Crescent Junction and it is hoped that the outstanding snags will be completed within the coming weeks.

Question 8. Cllr. P. Hogan:

“Can this Council initiate the inclusion of Blyry Industrial Estate and Garrycastle Business Park, which includes retail units from Wash House roundabout eastwards to Kilmartin’s Service Station within the town boundary?”

Answer: These areas were kept outside the approved proposal for the 2004 boundary extension as the compensation to the County Council for the major rates revenue loss was prohibitive. This would still be the case.

Question 9. Cllr. P. Hogan:

“Will this Council call on Westmeath County Council for the provision of a series of mini-roundabouts from Wash House roundabout to Kilmartin’s Service Station?”

Answer: Westmeath County Council has approved of traffic signals at Garrycastle Business Park/Athlone Business Park junctions.

Question 10. Cllr. A. Berry:

“Will Athlone Town Council be making any necessary repair to the footpaths at Griffins shop in Northgate Street and Quay Bar as requested in a motion by me in September 2008?”

Answer: Proposals are included in the 2009 Block Grant.

Question 11. Cllr. A. Berry:

“Will Athlone Town Council please explain the lack of action in not repairing the road on the left side at the Garrycastle Bridge on the Cartronroy Road?”

Answer: This matter was examined as indicated in the reply to the motion at the November 2008 Athlone Town Council meeting and it is considered that any resurfacing of the area might entice vehicular traffic to encroach onto the area currently used by pedestrians, the subject of this question, thereby compromising the safety of pedestrians. There is not sufficient width currently at this location to provide segregated pedestrian facilities. While this area is not ideal for pedestrians, its current characteristics render it unattractive for vehicles thereby affording pedestrians a level of safety. There is no accident history at this location known to the Council and the ultimate solution to standardised pedestrian facilities at this location rests within the Garrycastle Bridge project which will be designed in detail in the current year.

Question 12. Cllr. M. O'Connell:

“Any update on the motions put forward for the ramps / traffic calming measures for St Annes and St Pauls Terrace?”

Answer: As indicated in the response to a question at the September 2008 Athlone Town Council meeting, a survey was carried out at St Peters Tce in August 2008 and it was deemed that ramps at this location were not warranted.

Question 13. Cllr. M. O'Connell:

“To ask WCC how the plan for the traffic calming, footpath upgrades and pedestrian crossing for the Baylough area is progressing?”

Answer: A detailed design for this scheme is currently being prepared by the Transportation Section of Westmeath County Council and this will be circulated to the members of Athlone Town Council on completion.

Castle Feasibility Study:

The Town Clerk informed the Members that Consarc and RAA who are undertaking the study, will make a Presentation to them and members of the Castle Development Committee on Monday 23rd March at 11.30a.m.

Driving Centres for learners:

The Members noted a letter from the Minister for Transport outlining the methods of delivery of driving tuition in Ireland and stating that the critical part of learning to drive, is the learners interaction with traffic and this can only happen he said in live traffic situations. However, he added that the R.S.A. is reviewing the manner in which learner drivers are taught to drive and this may lead to recommendations about how the process is managed in Ireland.

Energy Costs:

The Members noted a letter from the Commissioner for Energy Regulation in which he stated that the Commission is currently undergoing a review of energy.

It was agreed to circulate a comprehensive letter received from the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources outlining the procedure for regulating energy costs.

Conferences:

The Members noted the following conferences and the cost thereof:

Westport	–	National Tidy Towns Conference	–	27 th March, 2009
Sligo	–	National Housing Conference	–	30 th to 31 st March, 2009
Kilkenny	–	A.C.C.C. Conference	–	2 nd to 3 rd April, 2009
Portlaoise	–	L.A.M.A.	–	16 th / 17 th April, 2009

Litter at Battery Heights/Canal:

The Town Clerk stated in response to Cllr. Molloy's motion that this rubbish is primarily the remnants of an illegal bonfire for which the organisers of the bonfire are responsible, but if the Members so wish, the Council will expend its resources, removing the litter. Cllr. Molloy requested that this be done and other Members agreed.

Bollards at Connolly Street:

Cllr. Molloy requested that the bollards at Connolly Street be replaced to ensure the street remains pedestrianised, as it is currently very dangerous. The Town Clerk said the Council would replace the bollards with new lockable bollards if the Members so wish, but the keys will be kept solely in the possession of the Council and the Emergency Services. The Members agreed to this.

Footpaths at Griffiths Shop:

The Town Clerk stated in response to Cllr. Butler's motion that monies have been set aside in the Block Grant 2009 for the repair of the footpaths in this area.

No Election Posters:

In response to Cllr. Butler's motion asking all candidates in the forthcoming elections not to erect posters, the Town Clerk said that legal advertising is permitted for elections, but with a stipulation that such advertisements are not left in place for more than seven days after the date of the election. Cllr. Butler asked that no posters be erected in the interest of the Tidy Towns Competition. While some Members saw merit in the motion, they did not see it as workable and some felt independent candidates in particular needed this form of publicity. The Town Clerk concluded that not putting up posters would have to be a voluntary thing.

Disbanding of Seanad Eireann:

Cllr. Butler called on the Members to request the Government to hold a referendum to change the Constitution to disband Seanad Eireann, as we cannot afford an Upper House at the moment. Their work he said could be done by government committees. None of the other Members supported the motion and agreed with Cllr. Cooney when he said that the Seanad has an important function and an Upper House exists in most democratic countries. Cllr. O'Connell suggested the removal of Junior Ministers, while Cllr. Molloy felt there could be a reduction in the number of T.D.'s or Government Committees.

Overtime for road gritting:

The Town Clerk stated in response to Cllr. Lennon's motion that road gritting is being satisfactorily carried out in the town this year using a combination of the Town Councils plant and the specialist plant available to W.C.C. and this work is being carried out where necessary, out of hours, thus incurring overtime, but the associated budgets have been provided for these circumstances. He said that other out of hours emergency services for which the Council is responsible will be responded to, but given the current economic downturn, the Executive will be cautious and prudent in their consideration of any overtime for work activities in 2009.

Sites for new school at Cornamaddy:

In response to Cllr. Lennon's motion the Town Clerk stated that the provision of a new school at Cornamaddy is a matter for the School Board and the Department of Education and Science, the Council having no role apart from identifying sites. The Members were divided in their views of the Government's intentions at the movement, for the school.

Planning Enforcement – Churchwood and Woodville:

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. K. Moran that a report on Churchwood will be prepared by Planning Enforcement, W.C.C. and presented later to the Council. As regards Woodville Grange he said the Council has been pursuing the Developers to complete the Development for some years and while a lot of progress was made, it was found necessary to serve an Enforcement Notice in April 2008 on one of the Developers and at a District Court Hearing on February 18th 2009, the case was adjourned and the Developer was given 8 weeks to complete the works. Work is presently in progress, he added.

Cllr. K. Moran asked that the Members be kept informed, so that they can respond to queries from the public.

Standing Orders:

It as proposed by Cllr. K. Moran,

Seconded by Cllr. Cooney and resolved,

“That we hereby suspend Standing Orders to deal with the remainder of the items on the Agenda”.

Street enhancement for St. Mary's Square:

In response to Cllr. K. Moran's motion the Town Clerk stated that the Council will include St. Mary's Square as part of the future Town Centre Enhancement programme which will be carried out on a phased basis. Cllr. Moran welcomed this as the car park is in a terrible condition. Cllr. Hogan asked that the pot-holes be filled in at least.

Stile at Iona Park:

Cllr. K. Moran welcomed the Town Clerk's response stating that the stops will be re-installed at this location, in the current year.

Management of the Regulators:

Cllr. E. Moran requested the Council write to the Government asking it to deregulate the regulators, as they seem to be answerable to no one and to replace them with cross party committees. Cllr. Cooney felt the regulators were necessary overseers, but they need appropriate resources and personnel and the manner in which they operate should be changed.

It was proposed by Cllr. E. Moran,

Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,

"That we write to the Government requesting them to remove the Regulators and replace them with cross party committees".

Pedestrian Crossing at Castlemaine Street:

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. Hogan that the pedestrian crossing at Castlemaine Street is a Zebra Crossing and as such it is a controlled crossing and this is deemed to be the most suitable crossing type for this location. Cllr. Hogan disagreed with this, saying that a woman was knocked down there recently and that he felt, lights were needed. The Town Engineer said that a survey carried out by the NRA showed that uncontrolled crossings, were actually the safest and the Director added that accident history is the best indicator of need, as human behaviour is involved and this crossing does not have a big accident history. Cllr. Hogan requested that the Area Engineer re-examine the suitability of the crossing here.

Flooding at Ardbrae Park:

In response to Cllr. Hogan's motion, the Town Engineer said he would have the matter examined and hopefully resolved before the next monthly meeting.

Flooding at Alverno Drive:

In response to Cllr. Hogan's motion the Town Clerk stated that this matter will be examined by the Town Engineer and any necessary works will be carried out and funded from the Council's revenue budget.

Lighting at Texas car-park:

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. Berry that this area is not in charge of the Council, but rather is privately owned. Cllr. Berry requested that the Council write to the owners and Cllr. O'Connell felt there must be a Health and Safety issued involved here. The Town Clerk agreed to write to the owners.

Lighting at Newtown Terrace:

The Town Clerk stated in response to Cllr. Berry's motion that the Town Engineer will request the ESB Public Lighting section to examine this area and to identify any necessary upgrade of public lighting.

Playground for Assumption Road:

In response to Cllr. O'Connell's request for a playground for the children of Assumption Road, the Town Clerk informed him that the Council had spent the sum of €150,000 in 2007 on a playground at Wansboro Field which is within 500m of Assumption Road. Cllr. Berry supported the call for another playground, as he said the surface of the ground in Wansboro Field is very uneven and therefore not suitable for children. He asked that the Town Engineer examine it. There was no more support for the motion.

Estates being taken in charge:

In response to Cllr. O'Connell's motion the Town Clerk said that a report and presentation would be requested from the Enforcement Section of Westmeath county Council and the first bi-annual report will be presented to the June meeting. Cllr. O'Connell welcomed this.

Safety at Coosan Point:

Cllr. O'Connell requested the Council to write to W.C.C. asking them to segregate a safe bathing/swimming area at Coosan Point for the public and people training for swimming events, from those launching boats from the same area. An extension of the existing ramp would improve the situation also, he added. It was agreed to write to the County Council.

Determination of prison for accused:

Cllr. Cooney requested the Council to write to the Department of Justice requesting them to allow a Judges discretion to determine the prison to which an accused person shall be committed, where that accused person is already serving a sentence in a particular prison. It was agreed to write.

Use of headlights:

Cllr. Cooney requested that the Council write to the Garda Commissioner asking him to direct his Members to charge or summons persons for driving without reasonable consideration, where such persons fail to properly use their headlights at times of poor visibility. It was agreed to write.

This concluded the business of the meeting.
