

**Minutes of the May Monthly Meeting of Athlone Town Council which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street Athlone at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2004**

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**Attendance:**

Mayor: Cllr. K. Moran

Members: Cllrs. A. Berry, J. Butler, M. Cooney, F. Keena, N. McFadden, K. Molloy, E. Moran and B. Rowan

Officers: Ms. A. McGuinness, County Manager  
Mr. G. Lambden, Director of Services  
Mr. J. Walsh, Town Clerk  
Mr. A. Kelly, Town Engineer  
Mr. A. Bass, Administrative Officer  
Mr. B. Coughlan, Administrative Officer  
Ms. A. McNamara, Asst. Staff Officer

**I.B.A.L. Results:**

All the Members complimented the Town Engineer, Billy Coughlan, the outdoor staff, the Tidy Towns Committee and Residents Associations for the great result achieved in the recent Irish Business Against Litter survey. They felt it was very encouraging and hoped this level would be maintained if not improved on, in the future.

The Director of Services also thanked and congratulated all involved, to come seventh out of 31 towns was a great achievement and hopefully they would rise even higher in the future.

**New Civic Centre:**

The Mayor was joined by all the Members in noting the historic occasion of holding the first Council Meeting in the new Civic Centre. They congratulated all involved from the Members who took the decision, to the Town Clerk, the executive, the architects, engineers and builders. They felt the Centre would be a landmark and would help the rejuvenation of the town centre. The County Manager congratulated the Members on their first meeting there and thanked them for their support in providing the centre.

The Director of Services also joined the Members in congratulating and thanking all those involved in the project, which is a great achievement.

The Mayor also welcomed the opening of the Radisson Hotel in Athlone.

**Minutes:**

It was proposed by Cllr. Cooney, seconded by Cllr. Butler and resolved, “That we hereby adopt the Minutes of the April Monthly Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2004”.

**Matters arising from the Minutes:**

Clonbrock Court – Taking in Charge:

The Town Engineer informed Cllr. McFadden that a report would be presented to the Members at the next monthly meeting.

Securing the Railway Line:

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. Keena that he had received no response to his letter to the Chief Engineer with Iarnroid Eireann. He confirmed he would send a reminder.

Budget for Extended Area:

The Director of Services informed Cllr. Molloy that he had just received a Draft copy of the Budget and after further discussions with the Finance Officer of Westmeath County Council, he would present the Budget to the Members at the next monthly meeting.

Hallsbridge Housing:

The Town Engineer informed Cllr. Butler that costings of the outstanding work had been completed and when problems over wayleaves had been resolved, the remaining works could then be undertaken.

Graffiti:

The Town Engineer informed Cllr. K. Moran that prices had been requested from contractors for the cleaning of the graffiti at the Grotto. He was currently awaiting them.

**Disposal of Land:**

It was proposed by Cllr. K. Molloy, seconded by Cllr. Butler and resolved, “Pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001, the Housing Act 1966, Section 90 of the Housing Act 1966 and the Landlord & Tenant (Ground Rents)(No. 2) Act 1978, we hereby approve of the disposal of property in fee simple as set out in the schedule hereunder:

SCHEDULE

<u>Description of Property</u>	<u>Name of Purchaser</u>	<u>Purchase Price</u>
2 Ave Maria Tce., Athlone	Richard & Mary Fallon	€45.40
19 Mitchell's Tce., Athlone	Kathleen Fitzgerald	€39.30
115 Sarsfield Square, Athlone	James Dolan & Marie Joyce	€20.00

**Planning:**

The Town Clerk informed the Members that a planning application had been received from M/s Joe Lynch to demolish an existing apartment block at 1 – 5 Westbrook, an existing car wash and canopy and to construct a 2 storey showroom and service building and associated works at Lake View, Athlone which works will materially contravene the Town Development Plan as part of the area is zoned residential.

He indicated that the Council was amenable to granting permission for the proposed development and recommended that the statutory process be initiated and the proposed material contravention be advertised.

It was proposed by Cllr. McFadden,  
seconded by Cllr. Butler and resolved,

“Pursuant to the provisions of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 and in particular to Section 34 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, we hereby approve of the implementation of the statutory process for a material contravention of the Athlone Town Development Plan, in respect of the application of Mr. Joe Lynch for the demolition of existing apartment block, car wash and canopy and the construction of a 2 storey showroom and service building at lake View, Athlone Ref. P.D.

**Planning:**

The Town Clerk informed the Members that a planning application had been received from M. & M. Construction Co. Ltd., to construct 77 No. apartments at Connaught Street, Athlone, which works would materially contravene the Town Development Plan, as the area is zoned light industrial and technical. He indicated that the Council was amenable to granting permission for the proposed development and recommended that the statutory process be initiated and the proposed material contravention be advertised.

It was proposed by Cllr. Butler,  
seconded by Cllr. Molly and resolved,

“Pursuant to the provisions of the Planning & Development Act 2000 and in particular to Section 34 of the Planning & Development Act 2000, we hereby approve of the implementation of the statutory process for a material contravention of the Town Development Plan in respect of the application from M. & M. Construction Co. Ltd., for the construction of apartments at Connaught Street, Athlone Ref. No. 03/4313”.

### **Westside Regeneration Plan:**

The Members unanimously agreed to adjourn consideration of this Plan until the July Monthly Meeting.

### **Housing Capital Allocation:**

The Director of Services informed the Members that the Capital Allocation for housing for 2004 was €600,000.00, together with €230,000.00 to allow for the purchase of a bungalow for a special needs family.

Cllrs. Cooney, Berry and Rowan expressed great disappointment at this very low level of funding, but the Director pointed out that Westmeath County Council received €9M and half of that is for Lissywoollen and Athlone Town Council will have 95 houses there. €6M was allocated for the halting Site and that is now within the Town Council area too.

### **Paid Parking:**

The Members noted a letter from the Chairman of St. Francis Tce. Residents Association requesting that the Council introduce paid parking into the street, making it a zone A area. However, the Members were uncertain on whether or not to proceed, fearing that there might not be full support in the area for it.

The Director pointed out that the street was going to be resurfaced and the Council would meet with the residents on the issue. However, it was agreed to publicly advertise the proposal for paid parking and to invite submissions for consideration.

### **Roundabout at Killyon Hill/Retreat Road:**

The Director of Services circulated a report on the proposed roundabout at the junction of Killyon Hill and Retreat Road. He confirmed that he had conformed with all statutory requirements, no submissions had been received and it was proposed to proceed with the roundabout.

It was proposed by Cllr. E. Moran, seconded by Cllr. K. Molloy and resolved, “We hereby approve of the provision of a roundabout at Killyon Hill/Retreat Road junction, pursuant to the provisions of Section 179 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 and Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001”.

**Roundabout at Killyon Hill/Dublin Road, Bonavalley:**

The Director of Services informed the Members that it was proposed to provide a roundabout at the junction of Killyon Hill and the Dublin Road, Bonavalley and he recommended the initiation of the planning process.

It was proposed by Cllr. E. Moran,

seconded by Cllr. McFadden and resolved,

“We hereby approve in principle of the provision of a roundabout at Killyon Hill/Dublin Road, Bonavalley junction and pursuant to the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2002 and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, we hereby approve of the implementation of the required planning and public consultation process”.

**A.M.A.I.**

The Members unanimously adopted the following two Motions for consideration at the Annual Conference of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland to be held in Listowel from September 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

It was proposed by Cllr. Butler,

seconded by Cllr. McFadden and resolved,

- (a) “That the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to amend the Garda Siochana Bill to provide for representation by Town Councils on the proposed Joint Policing Committees”.
- (b) “That the Minister for Finance assign to Local Government the proceeds from stamp duty on second-hand houses”.

**Civic Receptions:**

Two requests had been received requesting Civic Receptions.

It was proposed by Cllr. Molloy,

seconded by Cllr. K. Moran and resolved,

“That we agree to refer these requests for civic receptions to the recently formed committee set up for that purpose”.

**Manager’s Orders:**

The Members noted the summary of orders circulated.

**Questions:**

Question 1. Cllr. J. Butler:

“Has an allocation of funding for the new urban area been agreed by Westmeath County Council?”

**Answer: A current expenditure budget to cover necessary expenditure in the extended area has been prepared by the Town Engineer and the necessary funding to implement the programme will be discussed with the County Finance Officer within the next 10 days. The Director of Services agreed to present the budget at the next Monthly Meeting.**

Question 2. Cllr. J. Butler:

“When will kerbside recycling be introduced?”

**Answer: Kerbside recycling will be introduced as part of the new arrangements to collect refuse. At the moment a decision of the Labour Court is awaited in regard to the Industrial Relations issues arising from the implementation of the new arrangement.**

Question 3. Cllr. M. Cooney:

“When will this Council designate the recently constructed parking area at Custume Place as a Loading Bay?”

**Answer: Road markings to give legal effect to the area as a loading bay will be put in place by the Developer during the coming week.**

Question 4. Cllr. K. Molloy:

“When will traffic calming measures at Parnell Square be put in place?”

**Answer: Before the end of September. They are part of the works programme for the current year.**

Question 5. Cllr. K. Molloy:

- (a) “Is new road through Railway Field essential for Town Centre Development?”
- (b) Has every alternative been looked at?”

**Answer: (a) Yes  
(b) Alternatives were considered and the Railway Field route was the optimum solution. This is an objective of the Town Development Plan and the Integrated Area Plan.**

Question 6. Cllr. F. Keena:

“What is the delay in providing a linked footpath between St. Mary’s Square and Gleeson Street as the public are presently forced out onto the roadway while walking?”

**Answer: These works form part of the Gleeson Street realignment scheme and are scheduled for this year and must take their place in the works priority schedule. The Director of Services agreed to discuss the works with the Area Engineer to try and bring them forward.**

Question 7. Cllr. F. Keena:

“Can this Council outline the reasons as to why Friary Lane should not be made “one-way for vehicular use”?”

**Answer: Alterations to the traffic flows on Friary Lane could be considered by the Council but the interests of other parties such as residents, property owners and the Gardai would first have to be obtained.**

Question 8. Cllr. A. Berry:

“Has Athlone Town Council had a change of view from the previous negative replies regarding the pedestrian pelican crossing at the Assumption Road/Beechpark junction?”

**Answer: This matter has been examined and pedestrian and traffic movements at this location do not warrant a pedestrian crossing. Junction enhancement measures have already been undertaken here.**

Question 9. Cllr. A. Berry:

“Has Athlone Town Council received any reply from the Minister for Defence or Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces regarding Jadotville?”

**Answer: The Minister for Defence has acknowledged the Council’s representations both directly and in a recent Dail response. Press reports indicate that a committee will enquire into this matter.**

### **Acknowledgements:**

The Members noted acknowledgements from the Minister for Defence, the Midland Health Board and the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, for letters sent to them.

### **Drugs Payment Scheme:**

The Members noted a letter from the minister for Health & Children in which he stated that the cost of the scheme has risen from €140M in 2000 to €192M in 2002, showing that the state is spending a lot on the scheme. Costs over €78.00 per month for any family are borne by the State and there are other schemes to cater for other medical needs.

### **The Irish Language:**

The Members noted a letter from the office of the Taoiseach which outlined the status of Irish in the European Union, while not an official or working language, it is a “Treaty Language”, meaning that all Treaties are also published in Irish and the Government monitors developments with a view to enhancing the status of Irish. Cllr. Berry was dissatisfied with this response.

### **“John Player Tops”:**

The Members noted a letter from the office of the Minister of Arts, Sport & Tourism, stating that his Department supported such projects through the Arts Council and our request would be forwarded to them.

Cllr Rowan stated that he had failed to get funding from the Arts Council for any voluntary group. The Director suggested that he discuss the situation with the Council’s Arts Officer, who had a limited budget.

### **Tourist Office:**

The Members noted a letter from Mr. Norman Black from East Coast & Midlands Tourism, in which he stated that there were no plans to move the Tourist Office from the Castle, which was one of the major attractions of the town.

It was agreed to meet with Mr. Black at noon on Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2004. Cllrs Berry, Keena, McFadden and Molloy were to represent the Members at the meeting.

### **Bus Shelters:**

The Members were pleased to note the letter from Bus Eireann stating that negotiations were nearing an end with contractors and that they had Portiuncula Hospital listed as one of their suggested locations.

### **Gas Supply:**

The response from the Commissioner for Energy Regulation concerning gas supply throughout Athlone was circulated to the Members. They noted that the process to procure a gas distributor/supplier for Athlone had commenced.

### **Relocation of Athlone Mixed National School:**

The Members noted with disappointment the response from the Minister for Education and Science in which he stated that a deputation would not be useful at this time.

The Members felt that they should look for a deputation with the Minister for the Environment so that he might be able to speed up decisions and funds, as the road, displacing the school, was a necessity for the town. It was also agreed to seek a meeting with officials from the Department of Education.

### **Pedestrian Crossings:**

In response to Cllr. Rowan's motion, the Town Clerk stated that there was no funding available for a pedestrian crossing at Connaught Street and the road crossings at the Crescent will be dealt with as part of the Railway Field Road Works Programme. Cllr. Rowan requested the Town Engineer to examine and cost pedestrian crossings to help the visually impaired in the immediate future, especially at the Crescent.

### **Car-parking at Dean Kelly School:**

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. Rowan that the question of providing additional car-parking at the school, is a matter for the school itself. Cllr. Rowan pointed out that the only land available there is owned by the Council and would it reconsider the matter.

### **Dean Crowe Theatre:**

In response to Cllr. Rowan's request for an increase in the Council's contribution to the Theatre, the Town Clerk stated that this was a matter for the elected Members to consider at the Annual Budget Meeting.

### **Pedestrian Crossing at Dr. Dobbs:**

The Town Clerk stated, in response to Cllr. Molloy's motion, that the area will be examined by the Town Engineer to determine whether or not a pedestrian crossing is warranted. All the Members supported Cllr. Molloy's motion.

### **Security for the Elderly:**

All the Members supported Cllr. Berry's request that the Council provide some funding for the elderly for the supply of security alarms for their homes. However, the Town Clerk informed them that this is not a function for which the Council has responsibility but he would write to the Department of Social & Family Affairs and to the Department of the Environment.

**Refuse System:**

Cllr. Berry requested that the Council write to the Minister for the Environment requesting him not to proceed with the new refuse system of “weigh less, pay less” as he felt it would cost people more in the end. The Members, however, disagreed with him as they felt it would be the most fair and equitable system.

**P.R.S.I. Benefits:**

Cllr. Berry requested that the Council write to the Minister for Social & Family Affairs requesting her to explain why people who leave employment after a number of years and who were paying P.R.S.I. do not benefit from same.

**Traffic Calming at St. Paul’s Tce:**

In response to Cllr. Keena’s motion, the Town Clerk stated that ramps at St. Paul’s Terrace are not warranted, but if required by the Members, the appropriate funding must also be provided. The Members agreed more funding would have to be made available for ramps in the next budget.

**Traffic Calming at Arcadia:**

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. Keena that the Athlone Area Committee of Westmeath County Council have earlier this year agreed to traffic calming measures at the western end of Arcadia and funding has also been allocated. A contractor has been appointed to undertake this work.

**Parking at Athlone I.T.:**

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. Keena that this road at the college is a regional road maintained by Westmeath County Council and it is unlikely that more car-parking will be provided from the point of view of safety. However, he added that the Council will enforce the traffic regulations through the Traffic Wardens. Cllr. E. Moran said that there are shops and businesses there and that nothing should be done to make parking difficult for their customers. Cllr. Keena stressed that it is people parking all day that causes the problem. Cllr. E. Moran felt the Council should try to acquire the land owned by the College, between the road and the fence.

The Director of Services stated that an assessment of the type of parking there, would be undertaken and the Town Engineer would arrange a meeting with Mr. Mulhern of the A.I.T. regarding their lands. All agreed that the footpaths should be kept free for pedestrians and Cllr. McFadden pointed out that the hedging there was also restricting pedestrian use.

**Right of Way:**

Cllr. Butler requested the Council refuse planning permission to an applicant seeking a right-of-way from Grovelands onto Sarsfield Square roadway. The Town Clerk stated that this planning application is currently being processed by the Council and all aspects including the requirements of the applicants and of those who made submissions will be considered before a decision is made in the interest of proper planning and development of the area.

**The Canal:**

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. Butler that the Canal had been cleaned twice already this year and will in the future be cleaned when necessary. The area he added, will also be monitored by the Litter Warden to prevent illegal dumping. Some Members felt the Canal should be opened up and developed into a tourist attraction for the town, while others felt that the closing in of the Canal to provide green play areas, would be more feasible. The Director of Services pointed out that the Westside Regeneration Plan would do something towards improving the Canal and that maybe the Members should draw up a plan and cost it and that it might be implemented over a number of years.

**Pedestrian Crossing - Castlemaine Street:**

In response to Cllr. Butler's motion, it was agreed to write to Westmeath County Council requesting them to provide the lights at this crossing as soon as possible.

**Junction at Cova/Green Olive:**

The Town Clerk informed Cllr. McFadden that proposals and costings for work at this junction will be prepared and presented to the Council at the next Budget Meeting for funding. However, the Members expressed concerns over the dangers of this junction and hoped the Town Engineer might be able to do something in the interim.

**The Hanley Report:**

It was agreed to write to the Department of Health requesting them to clarify the status of the Hanley Report and in particular, whether it's implementation will be adopted, rejected or amended.

**Town's Drainage System:**

In response to Cllr. Cooney's motion the Town Clerk stated that the Report on the Drainage Scheme has been submitted to the Department of the Environment for approval and funding and the planning process will also be commenced.

**Any Other Business:**

Footpaths at Garrycastle:

Cllr. K. Moran requested the Town Engineer to meet with the residents of this area regarding the completion of footpaths there.

**This concluded the business of the meeting.**

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