

**Minutes of the Athy Municipal District Meeting
Held on Monday, 15 December 2014 at 10.00 a.m.
at Rathstewart Athy**

Members Present: Councillor M. Miley (Caithaoirleach), Councillors A. Breslin, T. Redmond, I. Keatley and M. Wall

Also Present: Mr J Boland (Area Manager), Mr J. Coppinger (Senior Engineer), Mr D. O'Flaherty (Athy Municipal District Engineer), Mr. G. Duff, (A/Senior Executive Officer), K Kavanagh (Senior Executive Officer), Ms M. Dalton (Meetings Administrator), and Mr J. Hannigan (Secretary)

Apologies: Councillor M. Dalton

MY01/1412

Comments appearing on Social Media about MD Members

The Cathaoirleach raised the issue of derogatory comments about elected members of the Municipal District appearing on the Facebook page of Councillor Redmond following the recent vote at a full council meeting on a number of motions concerning water charges and Irish Water. The members asked that he apologise for the comments and images on his Facebook page.

Councillor Redmond explained that he did not put these images on his Facebook page, they had been put there by a third party and he had taken them down. He was asked if he wished to apologise, however, Councillor Redmond reiterated that he had not put the images on his Facebook page.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Keatley that this be referred to the Protocol Committee.

AY 02/1412

Confirmation of Minutes

The committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November and the budget meeting of the 8 October 2014 together with the progress report.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Wall, seconded by Councillor Keatley, that the minutes be confirmed and taken as read. The progress report was noted.

Matters arising

HSE representative to attend next meeting

The meetings administrator informed the members that the HSE had confirmed that Mr William Merriman from the HSE would attend the next meeting .

Resolved that this issue to be listed on the agenda for next months meeting.

Car Park Kildangan

The members asked had the design been prepared. Mr Duff advised as soon as he had a copy he would forward it to members.

Resolved that the design when received be circulated to members.

Ard Na Laoi Castledermot

The members queried if there was any update on taking in charge of Ard Na Laoi.

Resolved that this be followed up and kept on progress report for update

Public Lighting policy

The members expressed their disappointment at the response times to complaints logged directly with Airtricity.

Resolved to refer this to Roads, Transportation and Public Safety for investigation and follow up.

Oak Park

Resolved following a discussion by the members to check the type of bond that was in place for Oak Park.

Distillery Park

Resolved following a discussion by the members to check the type of bond that was in place for Distillery Park.

Servicing of Central Heating Boilers in Council properties

The members welcomed the rebate promised to those who had paid a deposit to the Council to have their central heating boilers serviced. They queried if there is a schedule for servicing of central heating boilers and, if so, when would the boilers be serviced.

Resolved to update the members as to when boilers will be serviced.

Skate Board Park

In response to a query from the members as to when the skate board park would be completed, the meetings administrator advised that in the original report works were to commence before the year end and subject to weather conditions being suitable it was hoped to have it completed before the end of year.

Resolved that the response be accepted.

AY04/1412

Southern Distributor Road

Mr Coppinger updated the members advising that interviews had been held and the project engineer had been appointed and would be employed on a full time basis. In response to a query from Councillor Redmond regarding the plans, Mr. Coppinger said that they were currently looking at previous plans and environmental impact statements to see how relevant they were.

Resolved the report be noted and item to be kept on agenda for update.

AY05/1412

Sight Lines at Old Grange Junction

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Miley
That the council investigate improving the sight lines at the Old Grange Junction on the R415.

A report was circulated to the members from the Roads Transportation and Public Safety Department advising them that the sightlines at this junction are somewhat curtailed by existing walls and hedgerows. The improvement of these sightlines would entail land acquisition at this junction. The Roads Design Department would undertake a detailed survey at this location to determine what exactly will be required to achieve a safe sightline.

Resolved that the report be noted and members be updated on progress.

AY06/1412

Traffic Management for Future Closures of National Motorways in County Kildare.

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Miley

That the council work with the NRA to ensure that proper provisions will be put in place for traffic management for future closures of national motorways in County Kildare.

A report was circulated to the members from the Roads, Transportation and Public Safety Department advising them that the present situation was that Kildare County Council was informed by the private companies operating the motorways on behalf of the National Roads Authority (NRA) that closures would occur on the motorway and that diversionary routes were in place. It was the opinion of the Municipal District Office that Kildare County Council should be consulted on any closures of the motorway that would impact on its road network. The Kildare National Roads Office reported that the Council will ensure that in future precautions were taken to ensure minimal impact on national and local traffic.

The members expressed their amazement at the chaos caused by poor planning for the closure of the motorway. People had missed flights because of the chaos and it had taken two hours longer for some motorists to get home. A sign warning motorists on the Dublin side of Naas would have resolved a lot of the problems. They also complained about the lack of an emergency telephone number to contact the NRA and asked that the NRA be invited to attend the next meeting. In response to this, Ms. Kavanagh advised that an emergency phone number for the NRA would be requested to circulate this to all members.

Resolved that an emergency number for NRA be provided to Councillors and an invitation be sent to the NRA to attend the next meeting.

AY07/1412

Footpaths in Castledermot

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Wall

That the council immediately bring the existing footpaths in and around the town of Castledermot up to a proper standard given the problems residents are having there at the moment.

A report was circulated to the members from the Roads, Transportation and Public Safety Department advising that some of the existing footpaths in Castledermot (as well as other

towns and villages in the Municipal District) were quite old and were in need of rehabilitation. In recent times the Municipal District Office had been concentrating on the provision of new footpaths. This work had been undertaken with finance from the National Transport Authority (NTA). This was the problem with older footpaths. There has been no source of finance made available to bring these footpaths up to a proper standard. It was the opinion of the Municipal District Office that funding should be made available for this work and then footpaths which required upgrading should be prioritised.

The members agreed that this needed to be dealt with urgently. The Municipal District engineer informed the members that only funding for new footpaths was provided by the NTA. The budget for the maintenance of footpaths in 2014 was €20,000. Councillor Miley asked if the money from the Local Property Tax (LPT) could be used. The members are to meet in January to discuss where money for the LPT should be spent.

Resolved that the report be noted and the members to organise a meeting early in the new year to allocate LPT funds for footpath repairs.

AY08/1412

Bus Shelter in Monasterevan

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Redmond
What work has been done to secure a bus shelter in the Monasterevin area since the department has granted funding for this?

A report was circulated to the members from the Roads, Transportation and Public Safety Department advising that there were ongoing discussions with the Department on this issue but no final decision had yet been reached. The members will be advised of any progress in this matter.

Councillor Redmond asked if this issue could be expedited as quickly as possible. The municipal district engineer explained that it was up to the bus companies to apply for permission and locate a suitable site and did not see a difficulty in engaging with the bus companies to help them identify such sites.

Resolved that the report be noted

AY09/1412

Repairs on Bridge at Sprattstown

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Keatley
Can the council request the NRA to carry out repairs on the bridge in Sprattstown?

A report was circulated to the members from the Roads Transportation and Public Safety Department advising that Sprattstown Bridge or, more specifically, the parapet walls of the bridge have been struck by vehicular traffic many times over the years. Kildare County Council has repaired the walls on many occasions. This bridge would be scheduled for repair in the coming months.

Resolved that the report be noted.

AY10/1412

Footpath along the Carlow Road in Athy from Ardreigh to Coneyboro

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Wall
Can the council confirm the up-to-date position with the provision of a footpath along the Carlow Road in Athy from Ardreigh to Coneyboro as previously discussed?

A report was circulated to the members from the Roads Transportation and Public Safety Department to the members advising them that this scheme, with a substantial number of other schemes, had been included in a submission to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for approval for funding in 2015. The members will be advised if funding is approved.

Resolved that the report be noted and members to be advised of progress.

AY11/1412

Access Abbeylands Estate Castledermot

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Wall
Can the council examine the problems with access, speed and safety particularly at school hours in the Abbeylands estate, Castledermot?

A report was circulated from the Roads, Transportation and Public Safety Department to the members advising that this estate, like a number of others in close proximity to schools,

experienced a rise in traffic levels at school opening and closing times. There was very little that could be done as these were public roads and all members of the public had a right to use them. There were proposals to introduce 30kph speed limits in estates. It was the opinion of the Municipal District Office that these limits will only be as good as the enforcement of them.

In response to a query from Councillor Wall enquiring if traffic calming could be introduced, Mr Flaherty advised that there was a county wide review of traffic ramps in housing estates being carried out and he could not commit to something which was under review. Councillor Wall asked that he look at the policy and prepare a design.

Mr Flaherty agreed to request a design for the estate but advised the members that no ramps had been installed in Kildare in the last 4 to 5 years.

Resolved that the report be noted and a traffic calming design be requested for the estate.

AY12/1412

Paid Parking in Athy over Christmas

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Miley
Can the Athy Municipal District support free parking in Athy over the Christmas period?

The members welcomed the introduction of free car parking until 5 January.

AY13/1412

Street Cleaning Schedule

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Breslin
Could the council provide the up-to-date sweep cleaning regime in the municipal district?

A report was circulated from the Roads, Transportation and Public Safety Department to the members advising them that Kildare County Council was formulating a new street sweeping plan for the County which would co-ordinate all of the changed Municipal Districts. In the case of Athy Municipal District, the town of Monasterevin would have to be assimilated into the District plan.

In reply to request from Councillor Breslin asking that we liaise with residents associations to help them in their efforts, Mr. O'Flaherty advised that they were considering using a combination of Kildare County Council and private vehicles to increase the frequency of cleaning however he was unsure at this stage that if private estates could be accommodated. Councillor Breslin also asked that public litter bins be emptied more frequently

Resolved that the report be noted.

AY14/1214

Footpaths Abbeylands Estate Castledermot

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Redmond
That this council immediately investigate and find solutions for two main problems of residents in Abbeylands in Castledermot. The first problem of crumbling footpaths and the second of traffic problems with people using the cul de sac to drop students off to school, thus causing major traffic problems.

Mr O'Flaherty advised the members that this estate, like a number of others in close proximity to schools, experienced a rise in traffic levels at school opening and closing times. There was very little that could be done as these were public roads and all members of the public had a right to use them. There were proposals to introduce 30kph speed limits in estates, however it was the opinion of the Municipal District Office that these limits will only be as good as the enforcement of them. He also advised that there were problems with older footpaths, and funding needed to be found to repair and restore them, however repairs to footpaths needed to be planned on a priority basis.

Councillor Redmond suggested that a letter issue to the Board of Management of the school asking their help in dealing with the parking and traffic congestion. It was further suggested that a letter be sent to the KWETB asking if they could help in funding the repair of the footpaths in close proximity to the school.

Resolved: That the report be noted and that a letter issue to the board of management and the KWETB asking their assistance.

AY15/1214

Old Grange Wood Estate

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Redmond
Please explain to the municipal district councillors what has been done to bring a site resolution to the Old Grange Wood estate in Monasterevin? There has been no public interaction since last April which is very worrying.

The members were informed that a site resolution plan had been requested from the developer for Old Grange Wood. Negotiations were ongoing with the developer on resolving the issue with two estates. They were awaiting CCTV reports on Gallows Hill and were awaiting a site resolution plan for Old Grange Wood. Contact had been made with individuals or groups informing them of progress in May, July, October, November and December.

Councillor Redmond asked if a petition had been received from the residents of Old Grange Wood. Mr Kavanagh expressed his concern that incorrect information about contact had been allowed to go forward as part of the question. He informed the members that plans were at an advanced stage for the taking in charge of a number of estates.

Resolved that the report be noted and the Planning Department to confirm if a request had been received from the residents of Old Grange Wood to be formally taken in charge.

AY16/1214

Flood relief scheme River Lerr

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Keatley.
That the council implement a flood relief scheme at the bridge on the River Lerr in Castledermot.

Mr O'Flaherty advised the members that he was looking at a scheme for this in 2015. There was an area of special conservation nearby and any works undertaken had to recognise this. The scheme would also have an input from the parks and wildlife department.

Councillor Keatley advised that the green area needed to be protected and suggested a type of non return gully to solve the problem.

Resolved that the report be noted

AY17/1214

Rezoning of Lands St Evins Park

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Redmond
That this council, by way of motion, remove the zoning of residential lands the council owns near St Evins Park in Monasterevin where the sports facilities are to take place and zone this land amenity land. This should signify to the public we are serious about investing in these areas left behind by the celtic tiger.

The meetings administrator read a report from the Housing Department informing the members that the subject site located to the west of St. Evin's Park was currently zoned F: Open Space and B: Existing/Permitted Residential in the Monasterevin Local Area Plan 2008. Having regard to the Land Use Zoning Matrix (Table 14) of the LAP, the development of sports facilities is 'permitted in principle' on lands zoned 'F' and 'open for consideration' on lands zoned 'B'. It was envisaged that the draft Local Area Plan would be placed on public display in early 2015. Submissions from the public would be sought at that stage and considered as part of the review process. Any change to land use zonings must be considered as part of the statutory review process of the Local Area Plan which was imminent. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Housing Department was currently in the process of reviewing the housing land bank for the provision of future social housing. It would be inappropriate at this time to change the zoning of land in the council's ownership prior to a full assessment of the plans for social housing delivery.

In response to a query from Councillor Redmond regarding the timescale for the Local Area Plan and would the review be carried out in time, Mr. Kavanagh advised that there was a housing review being carried out at the same time. Councillor Miley agreed with the sentiments of the motion. Councillor Wall believed that the motion was premature. The Local Area Plan should be on display in January and the public would then be given an opportunity to express their views.

Resolved that the report be noted

AY18/1214

Repair to Fence at Canal Walk Athy

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Keatley.
That the council repair the fence in Canal Walk, Athy as a matter of urgency.

A report was circulated to the members from the Housing Department advising them that the damage to the fence had been assessed and the works would be carried out in the near future.

Resolved that the report be noted

AY19/1214

Inclusion of Athy and the Blueway Project

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Wall.

That the council supports the need for a spur route along the Barrow line into the centre of Athy to join the proposed Blueway Project and recognise the potential this project can bring to the Athy Municipal District.

A report was circulated to the members by the Community and Enterprise Department advising them that there were a number of objectives to be achieved by the creation of Blueway along the Barrow line. One of these was that a number of towns had been identified to be developed as tourism and activity hubs. Athy had been identified as one of these hubs. It was envisaged that this concept would be developed further as the development of the Blueway progresses.

Resolved that the report be noted

AY20/1214

Opening hours Athy Library

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Breslin

That consideration be given to extending the opening hours of Athy Library.

A report was circulated to the members by Library services informing them that given ongoing limitations of library staffing resources, Kildare Library and Arts Service at this moment in time were not in a position to extend the opening hours of Athy Library.

Councillor Breslin expressed her disappointment with this response as it did not answer the question that was asked. She referred to the number of people using the services and also noted that the demand for the service was growing. She asked why Castledermot and

Monasterevan libraries are open on a Saturday and Athy is closed. Councillor Keatley supported this motion.

Resolved that this item remain on the agenda and a further response is to be prepared for the next meeting.

AY21/1214

Review of Local Authority Housing

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Breslin.

In view of the recent Government announcement allocating funding for social housing, that the council now start a programme of constructing housing for persons, including children, who have specialised housing requirements.

A report was circulated to the members advising them that the Housing Department were in constant contact with officials in the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in respect of the delivery of social housing throughout the county in the context of the *Social Housing Strategy 2020*. The delivery of units was dependant on capital funding from the Department of Environment and the council would review progress and the potential for the purchase of existing units in the context of the three pillars of social housing support as outlined in the strategy i.e. Pillar 1 - New Social Housing, Pillar 2 - Private Rented Sector and Pillar 3 - Reform creating more flexible and responsible Social Housing Supports.

Councillor Breslin informed the members that the report did not merit a comment. It did not deal with the motion that was raised. She asked had provision been made for families where members had special needs and asked if a medical expert is employed to advise on their needs as this was not addressed in the answer. Councillor Redmond supported Councillor Breslin in her comments. The members asked to see a copy of the agreement between Kildare county Council and the HSE for the provision of a suitably qualified person to assist the housing department.

Resolved that the motion remain on the agenda for update.

AY22/1214

Promote a Positive image of the Municipal District

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Miley
Can the members of Athy Municipal District support a motion to work together to portray Athy Electoral Area in a positive manner?

The Cathaoirleach asked that all members portray a positive image of the Athy Municipal District. He outlined the commitment given by the Chief Executive with regard to a new library, and the positive developments such as the southern distributor road, the increase in planning permissions and the building of the new playground. The members agreed to work for the good of the area.

Resolved to note that the members supported the motion.

AY23/1214

Suspension of Standing Orders

As it was now 1 p.m. it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders for 30 minutes on the proposal of Councillor Wall, seconded by Cllr Miley.

AY24/1214

Refurbishment of Emily Square

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Breslin
When will plans/drawings and a briefing session be held in relation to the proposed refurbishment of Emily Square, Athy?

Ms Patricia Hyland from the planning department gave an outline proposal on what could be done on the refurbishment of Emily square.

The members thanked Ms Hyland for a very interesting presentation. They highlighted the need for parking, keeping traffic flowing and returning the Square to public use and they also enquired about the public consultation process.

Mr Boland informed the members that it was his intention to keep the Cathaoirleach and the members involved and that they were working on the procurement document for e-tenders at the moment.

Resolved the report was noted and members would be kept updated on progress

AY25/1214

Suspension of standing orders

As the time was now approaching 1.30 p.m. it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders again on the proposal of Councillor Wall, seconded by Councillor Miley.

AY26/1214

Presentation by Brand Athy and Outdoor Tourism

The members welcomed Ms. Patricia Berry and Ms. Helen Dowling from Brand Athy and Outdoor tourism who gave a presentation to the members on their plans and targets for the coming years. The members felt that this work needed to be extended to the whole municipal district area and also advised that the private sector needed to buy in to work being done. It was important that there were regular reviews of the plans and it was important for the members to have an input. It was agreed that the members meet with Ms Berry and Ms Dowling, and Mr Boland to go through the plan over the coming weeks.

Mr Boland advised that BRAND/Outdoor Tourism had been very fruitful, however, it is a big area and we need to package it and break it down and referred to the importance of the members involvement. He suggested that 3 or 4 projects be listed under the headings and work on progressing them with committees.

Councillor Miley stated that the proposal to go ahead was supported by all the councillors and he asked if the budget could be increased. He suggested that the Municipal District Members meets all of the residents' associations in February and added that the work of brand Athy and Outdoor Tourism has the endorsement and support of the committee and thanked the officials for their work.

Resolved that the report be noted and item to remain on the agenda each month.

The meeting concluded.