

Minutes of the Athy Muncipal District Meeting held on Monday, 18th May 2015 at 10.00 am at Muncipal District Office, Rathstewart, Athy

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

Officials Present: Mr J Boland (District Manager), Ms E Hanlon (Head of Finance), Mr J Coppinger (Senior Engineer), Mr D O Flaherty (District Engineer), Mr G Duff (A/Senior Executive Officer), Ms A Aspell (Meetings Administrator), Ms O Mooney (Secretary) and other officials.

AY 01/1505

Special Meeting

A closed session had been arranged before this meeting but the Director of Services for Housing was unable to attend. The members agreed to call a special meeting (in committee) on Thursday, 28th May 2015 at 10.00 am in the Committee Room, Aras Chill Dara, Naas to meet with the Director of Services for Housing and the Building Control Section.

Resolved that a special in committee meeting be arranged for 10 am on Thursday, 28 May 2015 in Áras Chill Dara to discuss housing and planning issues.

AY 02/1505

Presentation from Roads Safety Officer

Mr Declan Keogh, Roads Safety Officer, made a presentation outlining the role of the Road Safety Officer, which is to provide road safety, education and awareness among key groups within the community, to further promote road safety in an effort to reduce road death and serious injuries and to liaise with key stakeholders in road safety in implementing road safety campaigns and strategies. He stated that he is also responsible for the Adult School Wardens and Junior School Wardens in County Kildare. In his presentation, he outlined the education programmes that are provided in schools and the local festivals and events that he attends.

The cathaoirleach stated that Mr Keogh was carrying out great work through the schools and on behalf of the council in putting Kildare on the map for road safety. He raised the terrible accident on the N78 earlier in the year and how devastating it had been for the families of those involved and the community.

The members welcomed the presentation, noting that Mr Keogh has received a number of national honours for his work. The members discussed a number of matters arising from the presentation including; whether there would be any more school wardens available for this district, what Mr Keogh's general opinion are with regard to ramps in housing estates and "Children at Play" signs, what input he had with regard to site investigations after accidents, could an educational programme for parents with regard to parking issues around the school campus in Athy be considered. The members also noted that education and vigilance need to be ongoing with regard to road safety.

Mr Keogh stated that there were no requirements at present in Athy for school wardens. School Wardens are normally provided only in areas of high risk. He stated that a review would be carried out shortly of the School Warden Programme. With regard to ramps in housing estates, the District Engineer deals with this solely and he links in with the residents associations. With regard to the school campus, he stated he had visited the location on three occasions recently with the bus inspector and the matter was currently being reviewed.

Mr Coppinger stated that the Department of Transport would be sanctioning the 30 km/h speed limit in housing estates, but it would be up to the Gardaí to enforce. The council had carried out tests and found that the average speed currently in housing estates was 36 km/h. He added that works would be moving forward and that over 1,000 poles/signs would be installed. He stated that the council were well into the Roadworks Programme so contract work may need to be organised. He added that ramps work great when they are installed correctly, otherwise, they had to be replaced. He stated that the whole area of traffic calming and tools used, had to be reviewed.

In response to a query from Councillor Wall, Mr Coppinger indicated that the review of ramps would take a number of months to finalise. Mr. Coppinger added that it can take two years to receive the statistics from an accident as this data is collected by An Garda Síochána, and then sent to the Roads Safety Authority (RSA), the National Roads Authority (NRA) and then to the local authority.

The cathaoirleach asked why a gatso van was not on the N78 but was located on the Old Kilcullen Road. Mr Keogh stated that when the database for this project was set up, the new N78 was not constructed. Councillor Keatley stated that we need to find out why accidents are taking place on the N78. Mr Coppinger stated that the National Roads Authority (NRA) carry out tests on this road and also in the town of Athy. Councillor Redmond asked that the issue of road safety on the N78 be referred to the Joint Policing Committee.

The members asked that Crookstown National School would be added to Mr Keogh's list for school wardens.

The cathaoirleach thanked Mr Keogh for his excellent and comprehensive presentation and he withdrew from the meeting.

Resolved that Mr Keogh include Crookstown National School on his list for school wardens and also that the issue of road safety on the N78 be referred to the Joint Policing Committee.

AY 3/1505

Confirmation of Minutes and Progress Report

The members considered the minutes of the monthly meeting held on 20 April 2015.

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

Matters Arising

Accommodation for Athy Rowing and Canoe Club

Councillors Redmond and Wall raised this issue and asked for an update on the discussions between the District Engineer and the Rowing Club. The District Manager stated that two meetings had taken place with the Canoe Club and another was scheduled to happen shortly to discuss looking at two possible sites. He stated that he would keep the members informed, but this project was unlikely to happen in the current year.

Resolved that this matter remain on the progress report and members kept informed of progress.

Installation of a Water Outlet or tap at the jetty area in Athy

Councillor Redmond raised this issue and stated that he was not happy with the report given to the meeting. He stated that a tap was a necessity at this location and that the council

should budget for the cost of its installation. The District Manager agreed that the report was negative, but there were costing problems associated with providing an outlet in this area.

Resolved that this matter remain on the progress report and that the matter would be further reviewed and members updated at their next meeting.

Policing Along Athy Waterways

Councillor Redmond raised this issue and asked how many alcohol fines had issued so far this year. He acknowledged that there was a huge clean-up carried out along these waterways a while ago and the area needs to be kept clean.

Resolved that a report on how many alcohol fines had been issued since the beginning of the year would be available for the next meeting.

Bridge at the Marina across from the Dominicans – Athy

Councillor Redmond raised this issue concerning the bridge which was erected at the marina by Athy Town Council and asked for an update on the matter. The District Manager stated that this issue had been raised before at town council meetings and referred to the Town Engineer at the time. He stated that he would ask the former Town Engineer to liaise with the District Engineer with regard to this bridge.

Resolved that the District Manager would ask the former Town Engineer to liaise with the District Engineer with regard to this issue.

Derelict Sites - Ard na Laoí, Castledermot

The District Manager stated that there were three sites; one had been resolved and in the case of the other two, enforcement notices had issued under the waste management acts and would be monitored to ensure compliance. Councillor Keatley asked when the other two sites would be inspected again and he stated that the crèche site had not improved. The District Manager clarified that the crèche site had been cleaned up and was now not considered to be derelict.

Resolved that the District Manager would give the members a further report at the next meeting.

Public Lighting in Rural Areas.

Councillor Wall raised this issue and asked what the policy was in regard to the supply of public lighting. He asked why public lighting could be supplied in Timolin but not in other areas. Mr Coppinger stated that the council was currently trying to put a policy in place for public lighting in rural areas. The cathaoirleach added that lighting in rural communities was vital for all concerned. Councillor Keatley thanked the council for the public lighting installed in Timolin.

Resolved that Mr Coppinger would come back to the members with regard to erection of public lights in rural areas.

Upgrade of the Road and Footpath at Carlow Road, Athy

Councillor Dalton raised this issue. Mr. Coppinger stated that this road was on the priority list and would be carried out dependent on funding being provided by the National Transport Authority (NTA).

Resolved that this work would be included on the priority list and work to be carried out dependent on funding being provided by the National Roads Authority and members updated at their next meeting.

Junction – Kilkenny/Barrowhouse (Entrance in Woodstock Close)

Councillor Dalton raised this issue and asked when the yellow box would be provided at this location.

Resolved that a yellow box at this junction be provided.

Upgrade of Road and Footpath from the Friary to the school in Castledermot

Councillor Breslin raised this issue and stated that she was very unhappy with the report stating that the progression of this project was dependent on funding being provided by the National Transport Authority. Mr Coppinger stated that he was still trying to push projects through for funding but it was proving difficult. He stated that it was not on the priority list but he hoped to have some money freed up later in the year.

Resolved that funding be looked at again regarding this project and that this matter be discussed again at their next meeting.

Cycle path from Calverstown to Ballyshannon National School

Councillor Keatley welcomed report but he said he wanted a commitment that this project would be included in the submission to National Transport Authority for funding in 2016. Mr Coppinger stated that he was currently putting projects together and it would be included.

Resolved that this project be included in the submission to National Transport Authority for funding in 2016.

AY4/1505

Update on the Improvements on the Sewage Network planned for Narraghmore Village

The District Manager welcomed those who attending the meeting from Narraghmore. He acknowledged that numerous representations had been made to the members on this issue and that the members were very frustrated with the situation. He advised the members that these improvement works were priority. He had spoken with Irish Water and there was a commitment to resolve the issues, however, he indicated that the resolution would take some time, possibly up to 24 months. The Waste Water Treatment Plant was not fit for purpose. Assessments were carried out and it could cost up to €200,000 to rectify the problem. The options were to either update the existing plant or provide a new system. There was a process to go through, for example, detailed design, assessment of environmental issues, tendering process (tender for consultants and tender for construction). He stated that the estate (Oak Park) would have to be taken in charge before works would commence.

The cathaoirleach stated that he was somewhat satisfied with the District Manager's update, however, he reiterated that sewage was still flowing into the green in Oak Park and causing terrible problems for those living there. This estate should be tankered on a daily basis in the interim. He added that public lighting on the main road into the village should be incorporated into the taking in charge process.

A discussion ensued with the members stating that the situation has been going from bad to worse over the years. Children in the estate have never been able to use the green area as it is full of raw sewage and this would only get worse over the summer months. They urged Irish Water to connect Oak Park into the sewerage system and to speed up the taking in charge of this estate. They agreed that in the interim, the sewage in Oak Park should be tankered.

The District Manager acknowledged that the situation was unsatisfactory. He stated that Irish Water is committed to resolve this issue and that interim measures would be looked at. It would be the intention that all estates would be linked into the new waste water treatment plant. He stated that he would discuss the possibility of tinkering from Oak Park with Building Control in order to put remedial works in place.

The members stated that they wanted a firm commitment by Building Control to take this estate in charge. They also asked that they meet with Building Control at their special meeting on 28 May 2015 to resolve this issue. The members thanked the residents of Oak Park for attending.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Miley, seconded by Councillor Redmond, that Oak Park be tankered immediately and that the members meet with Building Control at their special meeting to be held on 28 May 2015.

AY05/1505

Update on Community and Economic Development Issues

Ms Berry gave the members a comprehensive update of community issues and events coming up in the near future and events that had taken place since the last meeting.

- Pride of Place: Sent out application and spoke to groups regarding same.
- Major clean-up carried out recently and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) collection was very successful.
- Woodstock Forum Plan: Met with Simon Wallace and discussions underway.
- Tidy Towns Application: Clean-ups going very well. Met with the District Engineer, Dara Wyer and Simon Wallace with regard to three year plan.
- Updated the members regarding Dragon Boat Event.
- Updated the members regarding Swim Athy.
- New Event – Blueway Canoeing Marathon (2nd day of Triathlon):
- Tidy Towns: New Environmental Project/workshops in schools. Resources are in place.
- Triathlon – Currently advertising this event
- County Show: Have funding for 12 enterprise centres. Tidy Towns stand would incorporate all the groups other than Athy.

- Shackleton: Attended a conference “Ancient East” recently and would have to look at Food Festival again – October.
- People’s Park and Skate Park: Assisted with the opening which was very successful.

The members congratulated Ms Berry on her commitment and great work done on behalf of the council.

AY06/1505

Progress Report on Schedule of Municipal District Works

The District Engineer gave an update of all roadworks which had commenced in the municipal district since January 2015.

The members thanked the District Engineer for all the work carried out to date. Councillor Wall asked for an update and survey on Cloney Bridge. He said good work had been done at the entrance to the Catherine McCauley car park. He stated that a permanent solution, not just patchwork was required at Meeting Lane car park. He added that the entrance to Butler’s Lane needed to be looked at.

Councillor Keatley stated that the district office was pro-active but he understood, at times, were constrained by lack of resources. He asked that signposting at crossroads be investigated and asked for an update on re-surfacing works on old N9.

The District Engineer stated that Catherine McCauley car park was one-way system which was safer and repairs were carried out to entrance to the car park. In relation to signposting, the district office had started works since January and most of these were completed. In regard to the old N9, resurfacing works are in process and works would be continuing from Crookstown up to Moone this year. In regard to the Skateboard Park, resources were available for a car park at this location but a design would be required and urbanised lighting would need to be incorporated into the design.

Mr. Coppinger stated that a survey had been carried out and repair works would be done on the bridges in the worst condition this year. Councillor Wall asked for an update on monies (€80,000) that were allocated for repair of bridges. Mr. Coppinger stated that there was no central government funding for this project. The council gets money from the Department of Transport and this money ran out before works could be carried out on Cloney Bridge.

However, he stated that if funding returns, this project would be put on the top of the priority list.

The meetings administrator read a report from Ms A M Conneely, Community and Culture, indicating that €7,500 of local property tax (LPT) monies would be allocated to community groups. Each group had been allocated €202 and would be paid alongside their community and festival grant, with a letter stating same and this would be finalised by June this year.

Resolved that the members be kept informed of progress with regard to works ongoing.

AY07/1505

Update on Progress on the Southern Distributor Road

Mr. Coppinger stated that consultants, Roughan & O'Donovan/AECOM had been appointed. He stated that works had begun and that traffic counters and studies had commenced and that he had met with Iarnród Éireann in order to identify any difficulties that may arise with this project.

Councillor Dalton welcomed the progress on this project and asked whether there were any new issues with regard to meeting with Iarnród Éireann and also asked whether a meeting would be arranged with sporting clubs in the town. Councillor Wall asked for some background on the consultants and suggested that it would be important for the members to meet with the consultants.

Mr. Coppinger stated that the project is progressing as quickly as possible. He stated that he would arrange for the consultants to meet with the members at some point. In regard to route selection, he stated he was not sure when it would be re-examined but he would come back to the members. In regard to meetings with Iarnród Éireann, there were no new issues just opening meetings up with them. In relation to meetings with sporting clubs, he would need to deal with the main issues first and then other peripheral issues would be dealt with. In relation to the background of the consultants, they have particular expertise in bridge building and have been involved in a number of projects in Kildare.

Resolved that the members would meet with the consultants in due course and that members be updated again at their next meeting.

AY08/1505

Update on the Application of Rates to Commercial Premises in Athy Town

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Wall:

Can the council confirm the up-to-date position with the application of rates to commercial premises in the town of Athy, has the authority informed rate payers of any proposed changes and has the authority any method of adjusting rates for previously unoccupied premises.

A report was received from the Head of Finance informing the members that commercial premises in Athy had been charged the exact same rates for 2015 as they were for 2014. Section 29 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides for the harmonisation of commercial rates between the former town council rating authorities (Athy and Naas) and Kildare County Council. In order to ease the transition to a single county rate, while avoiding a negative impact on the overall local authority revenue, the harmonisation of rates had been agreed by Kildare County Council members to take place over a five year period. The rate payers of Athy would be sent a letter mid-year informing them about the changes for their 2016 rates bills. Section 31 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for a change to rating law in relation to the refund of rates on vacant properties, it gives the power to the member to vary the levy of rates refunds that apply in individual local electoral areas with the authority's overall administrative area. The Kildare County Council members decided the vacancy relief should remain at 100%. This vacancy relief was applied to the relevant customers account each January on foot of an inspection by the Revenue Collector. Section 32 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided that the owner of a rated property must inform the local authority within two weeks of a transfer of interest in a property, where the transfer results in a change in the person liable for the rates on the property.

Councillor Wall thanked the Head of Finance for her attendance. He stated that there was a lot of concern and lack of knowledge on the side of businesses in the district, and asked when the statements would be issued to the businesses. He asked whether she had any contact from the businesses with regard to payment of rates and he asked whether the members had any powers to set a rate different from other towns.

Ms. Hanlon stated that the members had no powers in this regard. Statements would be issued in July this year and a letter would be issuing to ratepayers of the impending changes in 2016.

Councillor Wall stated that there was a lot of confusion with ratepayers in Athy of the percentage difference.

Ms Hanlon stated that the county rate was 68.95. Athy Town Council rate in 2014 was 56.29 and this was still the rate in 2015. Therefore, the first increase would be in 2016 and, over a five year period this would be increased to 68.95, an increase of 12.66 and this would bring the rate in line with the rest of the county.

Resolved that report be noted.

AY09/1505

Kildare County Council Grants Scheme 2015

Community and Festival Grants 2015

Ms. A M Conneely had circulated the members with her report and stated that 180 applications had been received in full for the county and that 35 of those were from the Athy Municipal District. They would receive their annual allocation together with €202 from the local property tax (LPT) allocation.

Councillor Breslin stated that she had spoken with the District Manager in regard to Athy Community Council and it was thought that there was a shortfall of funding to previous years. Councillor Wall stated that there was confusion with the public as to where to apply for this funding.

Ms. Conneely appreciated that there was a lack of structure but this would be looked at for 2016. In regard to Athy Community Council, Ms Conneely clarified that at the end of March 2015 the council had paid €9,400.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Wall, seconded by Councillor Breslin that the community and festival grants for 2015 be approved.

Arts Grants 2015

Mr. Eoghan Doyle circulated the members with a full list of arts grants for 2015. The breakdown of the grants were, professional artists, community groups, artist in schools bursary award, Tyrone Guthrie Residency Bursary Award, Platform 4 Recording Bursary and 3 Day Sound Engineering Training Bursary in Platform 4 Audio Studio. He stated that he was happy with applications received this year but he would be raising awareness for these grants in 2016.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Keatley, seconded by Councillor Dalton, that the arts grants for 2015 be approved.

AY10/1505

Installation of a Crossing Point at Athy Train Station

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Redmond:

That this municipal district, working with relevant agencies, install a crossing point at the Athy Train Station.

A report was received from the Roads Transportation and Public Safety Section informing the members that this road (National Secondary Route N78) was funded by the National Roads Authority (NRA) which would have to approve and fund any design and works.

Resolved that report be noted.

AY11/1505

Update on Programme of Roadworks for the Town of Monasterevin

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

That the council update its members on the programme of roads works for the town of Monasterevin and its environs including timeframes.

A report was received from the Roads Transportation and Public Safety Section informing the members that the municipal district office intends to undertake the following works in Monasterevin in the current year – there are a number of drainage issues at Passlands and St. Evin's Park that need to be resolved; the main road through the town (R448) requires attention in the current year and it is intended to surface dress a section of this road; there are a number of side roads ie Drogheda Street that will require surfacing in the coming months. Monasterevin and environs have only recently come under the aegis of the Athy Municipal District Office. The office was compiling a plan of works for the next three years

which would address the main issues in the town. This plan was dependent on finance being made available for the proposed works. At the moment, the office is undertaking extensive road works in the Coolagh/Derryoughter/Clairey/Rathconnell area which was part of the extended Athy Municipal District.

Resolved that this report be noted.

AY12/1505

Problem of Flooding at Passlands, Monasterevin

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

That the municipal district be informed of what plans has Athy Municipal District to alleviate the problem of flooding at Passlands, Monasterevin.

A report was received from the Roads Transportation and Public Safety Section informing the members that the R424 has a residual drainage issue from the canal bridge to the Barrow Bridge at Passlands. This area was included in works to be commenced in the current year.

Resolved that report be noted.

AY13/1505

Fixing of Bridge Walkways in Distillery Court, Monasterevin

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Redmond:

Can we immediately make fixing the bridge walkways in Distillery Court, Monasterevin a priority.

A report was received from the Roads Transportation and Public Safety Section informing the members that this was a design issue with the original estate. The Roads Design Department would examine this issue and would report back to the members. However, priority was currently being accorded to projects with approved and available funding.

Councillor Redmond stated that there was no firm commitment and he asked that this matter be brought up at the special meeting to be held on 28 May 2015.

Resolved that this matter be referred to the special meeting on 28 May 2015.

AY14/1505

Update on Re-development of Emily Square, Athy

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Breslin:

What is the up-to-date position of the re-development of Emily Square, Athy.

The District Manager stated that he had met with the Procurement Section and that they had just finalised tender documents. The project would be advertised very shortly and urban designers were in place. He said he would keep the members informed of progress.

Resolved that the members be updated at their next meeting.

AY15/1505

Remedial Road Works and Eradication of Flooding on Woodstock Street, Athy

The members considered the following question from Councillor Breslin:

Can a timescale be given for the remedial road works and eradication of flooding on Woodstock Street, Athy.

A report was received from the Roads Transportation and Public Safety Section informing the members that road works (including drainage) on Woodstock Street, Athy was part of a three year plan to improve all approach roads to Athy. In the current year, the municipal district office was concentrating on the Monasterevin Road. Works had been undertaken on trees, footpaths and drainage. It was proposed to surface the road during the school holidays.

Councillor Breslin reiterated that this road had terrible flooding and was in a dangerous condition.

The District Engineer stated that he had reviewed roads and footpaths in the Athy area and that he was concentrating on the Monasterevin Road due to the fact that all of the schools were located there. The Carlow Road would be done next year. Some works had been done on the Monasterevin Road.

Councillor Breslin asked whether the road would be lined and whether cycle lanes would be included on Monasterevin Road. The District Engineer stated that the issue of cycle lanes had been looked at. He added that this matter would be put on the list for the National Transport Authority (NTA) meeting in the next two weeks.

Resolved that all NTA projects be discussed at their next meeting.

AY16/1505

Installation of Recycling Bins near the Courthouse

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Redmond:

That Athy Municipal District examine the possibilities of installing recycling bins near the courthouse.

A report was received from the Environment Section informing the members that the existing recycling banks at the council carpark in front of Pettit's were due to be revamped as part of planned improvements to the carpark. Unfortunately, the courthouse is close to a number of houses and setback for those banks from houses would not be sufficient to comply with planning conditions.

Councillor Redmond stated that he was not happy with report and that the courthouse was an ideal position to put recycling bins. He added that the current car park in Pettit's was in a terrible condition and needed to be cleaned up. Councillor Dalton stated that he would have great concern about putting recycling banks at this location as people dumping there may not use the bins and would lead to more litter problems. He added that the courthouse was currently looking well and it would be a great shame to change this.

Resolved that report be noted.

AY17/1505

Building Control – Housing Estates

The members considered the following question in the name of Councillor Redmond:

Can we determine if housing estates built in this county be physically checked by officials and identified as fire safe? I believe we should start to check all housing estates so we never ever are victims of unscrupulous building practices. This should either be referred to the specific strategic policy committee or budgeted for as soon as possible.

A report was received from the Planning Section informing the members that based on the 2011 Census figures, there are in the order of 70,000 residential units in the county. It would not be practicable for the County Council to undertake this type of inspection program. The County Council does not have any statutory duty to do so. The role of the County Council in its capacity as a Building Control Authority (BCA) was set out in the guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment shortly after the adoption of the Building Control Act 1990. These guidelines indicated that the BCA should carry out inspections on between 12-15% of new buildings notified to it in Commencement Notices. This level of inspection had been exceeded in Kildare. The building control code which had been drawn up relies to a significant extent on the statutory responsibility of practitioners in the construction industry to design and construct buildings in accordance with the Building Regulations. The random inspections undertaken by BCAs are essentially supplementary to this primary statutory obligation. It was not a requirement of the Building Control Regulations for the developer to provide the BCA with any certificates of compliance with the Building Regulations prior to the introduction of the new Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (S.I. 9 of 2014), which came into effect in March 2014. Certificates of Compliance with the Building Regulations should have been provided to the purchasers (or their agents) of houses at the time of purchase.

Councillor Redmond welcomed the report. He asked for a list of inspections ie the names and addresses of estates and when they were checked. He asked that this matter would be passed onto Building Control and that it be discussed at special meeting held on 28 May next.

Resolved that this matter be referred to Building Control and that this matter be discussed at the special meeting held on 28 May 2015.

AY18/1505

Homelessness in the Municipal District

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

Given the ongoing and almost daily issues surrounding homelessness in the municipal district, that we are informed of what plans have the council put in place to deal with the increase, have they made the department aware of the problems and issues, will additional staff be put in place and has the issue regarding rent caps being discussed with the department.

A report was received from the Housing Section informing the members that the council continue to assess each presentation they receive for access to homeless services on a case by case basis. Persons presenting to Housing are advised to utilise their family and friends support network until they can source alternative rented accommodation. Where individuals have support needs we utilise our emergency beds available in Athy and Newbridge and where necessary commercially available family units. The Department of Social Protection (DSP) review and provide, on a case by case basis, rent supplement increases for persons at risk of being homeless or those who have secured accommodation at higher rents to ensure that the property is secured. The council also continue to source additional sources of housing supply identified under our Housing Strategy.

Councillor Wall was not happy that there was no housing official in attendance at the meeting in order to answer any questions in relation to this urgent problem. He stated that the Homeless Unit were doing terrific work but they need assistance with the increase of homeless in this district and county.

Councillor Breslin stated that the Housing Section was in crisis and that they were not working with the members adequately. The policy and system needs to change. She agreed that the homeless workers were doing great work but needed assistance urgently. She stated that there were instances where staff were being harassed and that this was not being dealt with by Housing. Councillor Redmond stated the whole situation in relation to homelessness was inadequate and the situation was only going to get worse. He stated that he was receiving several calls from persons seeking assistance with regard to housing. The cathaoirleach supported the members in his disappointment that the Director of Housing or a housing official were not in attendance. Councillor Wall stated that in relation to emergency accommodation, people are being told that they should live with relatives. He stated that people are contacting him because they are at crisis point.

The meetings administrator stated that the Director of Housing had sent his apologies for not attending and had clarified that he would be able to meet the members on 28 May 2015 in Áras Chill Dara. She stated that she would convey the members concerns to the Director and also check if staff from the Building Control section were available to meet with the members on 28 May 2015.

Resolved that the Director of Housing would meet with the members at special meeting on 28 May 2015 to discuss issues with regard to homelessness.

AY19/1505

Vacant Council Housing Units

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

That the municipal district be informed of the number of vacant council housing units in the Athy Municipal District and how long have they been unoccupied.

A report was received from the Housing Section informing the members that a vacant house report was issued to members at every monthly meeting of the council which includes the date on which the property was vacated. It was not proposed to issue the same report separately to Municipal District.

Councillor Breslin stated that she was not happy with this report.

Councillor Keatley stated that housing stock needs to be released to tenants as they are boarded up too long. Councillor Wall stated that there was a three bedroom house in the town boarded up. He added that this house should be available for renting by the council. Housing stock was taking too long to be turned around.

The cathaoirleach stated that housing stock was being damaged because it was taking too long to allocate tenants.

Resolved that this matter be discussed with the Director of Housing at special meeting on the 28 May 2015.

AY20/1505

Vote of Sympathy

The cathaoirleach wished to pass a vote of sympathy to Ms Annette Aspell on the recent death of her mother-in-law.

The meeting then concluded.