



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

Ashbourne Municipal District

Ordinary Meeting

10:00 a.m., 10th December 2019, Ashbourne Civic Offices

An Cathaoirleach, **Councillor Alan Tobin**, presided.

Councillors Present: Joe Bonner, Suzanne Jamal, Darren O'Rourke, Amanda Smith and Conor Tormey.

Officials in Attendance:

Senior Executive Officer: Dara McGowan

Meetings Administrator: Claire King

Executive Engineer: Mel Cronin

Staff Officer: Triona Keating

Apologies: Fiona Lawless, Director of Service

1 Confirmation of Minutes

1.1 Confirmation of minutes of Ordinary Meeting held on 12th November 2019.

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 12th November 2019 were confirmed on the proposal of **Councillor Darren O'Rourke** and seconded by **Councillor Alan Tobin**.

2 Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the meeting.

3 Expressions of Sympathy and Congratulations

Sympathy was extended to:



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

- All Meath County Council staff members, to whom sympathies were extended at the December full Council meeting

4 To receive an update on the Tara Conservation Management Plan

Michael MacDonagh, Chief Archaeologist, National Monuments Service attended the meeting along with Pauline Gleeson, Senior Archaeologist, National Monuments Service, Muirne Lyons, National Monuments Service, Ana Dolan, Senior Conservation Architect, OPW and Sinéad Gargan, Conservation Architect, OPW. A presentation was delivered, which outlined the background to the Tara Conservation Management Plan (CMP), the Terms of Reference of the Tara CMP Steering Group, key steps in preparing the plan, the public and stakeholder consultation process and outcomes, the principles, objectives and policies developed, a sample draft action plan and the next steps planned for 2020. The intention is to finalise and launch the document at the end of Q1 2020.

Matters raised by councillors included:

- Queried the resources available to implement the plan – it was conceded that resourcing remained a challenge but that the intention was to finalise the plan and then seek funding as appropriate.
- The possibility of providing an interpretive centre off site and providing transport to the site, taking into account the narrow approach roads and limited parking – all options will be considered by the relevant stakeholders.
- Issues identified during the public consultation, including issues with dogs, sheep and intimidating behaviour by some users, e.g. at Solstice – the OPW provide security at the gate for the mid-summer Solstice, with fires and camping equipment being prohibited. However, it is very difficult to control behaviour beyond that point and anti-social behaviour is a matter for the Gardaí. The OPW has also appointed two additional staff, due to commence in January, who will be involved in protective measures, including fencing off areas that are worn, enabling the grass to recover.
- Queried whether the public consultation period had concluded – whilst the consultation period has concluded, the plan will be kept under review by the Steering Group. The priority now is to implement the plan.



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

- Queried whether the site had reached capacity with the number of visitors per year – the sustainability principle applies to every site, whereby it can only take so many visitors and facilities cannot be extended indefinitely. The additional OPW staff will assist in managing the site in so far as possible.
- Queried whether sporting organisations would be able to continue using the site – it was acknowledged that the site, whilst not managed as a park, is used by many as a recreational park and for training by some groups. Whilst there is no intention to ban such usage, there needs to be an increased appreciation of the impact of such activities. Given the extent of the site and its delicate nature, alongside the number of international visitors, the aim is to strike a balance in accommodating the different users with the overall priority being the protection of the site.
- The need to improve signage on the motorways and other approach roads – it was pointed out that 92% of visitors arrive by car and over saturation is to be avoided.
- The need for improved communication between the relevant bodies to ensure that issues arising can be dealt with effectively, e.g. deciding who will take responsibility for issues arising.

It was pointed out that Meath County Council had allocated funding in its capital programme to provide match funding for future Meath County Council funding applications.

The Cathaoirleach and councillors thanked Michael and his colleagues for attending and for providing the information, which was warmly welcomed. The participation of the Elected Members on the Steering Group was acknowledged, as was the assistance of Loreto Guinan, Heritage Officer and staff from the Planning Department. Michael MacDonagh also reconfirmed the state commitment to Tara, pointing out that no other archaeological site in the country had received the same attention over the last eighteen months.

5 Statutory Business

5.1 Transportation

- 5.1.1 To receive a Progress Report on works undertaken/planned for Ashbourne Municipal District.



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

The report had been circulated in advance and key points highlighted. Matters raised by councillors included:

- Welcomed the works undertaken at Donaghmore, which had improved safety, but requested that consideration be given to additional signage/rumble strips for traffic from the Swords direction – a drone is to be used to assess traffic flows at the junction, with consideration to be given to regularising the junction. It was agreed to provide an update at the January meeting.
- Welcomed the bridge repairs at Donaghmore.
- Complimented the council staff who had undertaken works on behalf of Irish Water.
- Referred to ongoing issues with noise associated with night works from the community centre to the Nine Mile Stone Roundabout – the work programme was outlined, much of which was weather dependent, and it was agreed to keep councillors updated on progress.

The Cathaoirleach and councillors acknowledged the improvements throughout the year and thanked Mel and his team for their efforts.

5.2 Housing

5.2.1 To discuss issues relating to social housing developments in Ashbourne Municipal District.

Barry Lynch, Director of Service, Housing attended the meeting and outlined a summary report, which provided an overview of social housing provision in the municipal district from 2017 to 2019.

Matters raised by councillors included:

- The continuation of the acquisition programme – it was pointed out that units are acquired when they represent good value but that capital



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

funding from the department was likely to be directed towards direct provision rather than acquisition in the future.

- The number of Part V units being delivered despite the amount of development taking place – the preference is for the local authority to purchase 10% of the units, with Approved Housing Bodies having been very active in Ashbourne. The Part V agreements are also dependent on the timing of the original planning permission, i.e. prior to September 2015, alternative arrangements could be made and after this point, it reverted to a 10% allocation.
- The slow progress being made in delivering units on the Department of Education & Skills site – the process was outlined, including reaching an agreement with the department on the number of units to be provided and the funding required. Once a decision on funding is made, the Part 8 process can commence.
- Queried whether the department funding allocation for the DES site would include the land cost – the land cost represents 10% of the overall development cost, as determined by the Valuation Office, and this cost can be recouped from the department.
- The lack of social housing provision in Stamullen and Kentstown – unfortunately, a rolling expression of interest for houses/land did not result in increased provision in Stamullen or Kentstown.
- The planned delivery of units in Frederick Manor – this is being managed by an AHB and is planned for Q2 2020.
- The provision of housing on infill sites – it was pointed out that there is very limited council owned land in Ashbourne Municipal District.
- The need to include the provision of a playground in the initial design for the development on the DES site and ensure that this is provided prior to any units being occupied – the design includes an allocated space for a playground, as required by the County Development Plan for developments in excess of 75 units and this can be dealt with further, if required, as part of the Part 8 process. However, the



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

department would not fund the provision of a playground and this would have to be funded by own resources. It was agreed, on the proposal of **Councillor Joe Bonner** and seconded by **Councillor Alan Tobin**, that a letter issue to the Chief Executive on behalf of Ashbourne Municipal District councillors, expressing their view that the playground must be included in the initial design.

- Queried the design – the proposed unit types were outlined and it was agreed that an engineer would provide more detailed information at the January meeting.
- The need for an ongoing programme of management and maintenance of the site – it was pointed out that AHBs have dedicated funding streams for such activities. The Council has expanded the Tenant Liaison Section and has put in place a tenancy sustainment agreement with the Peter McVerry Trust to improve resources for tenants.
- Queried the plans to provide affordable housing – the Scheme of Priority for Affordable Housing was adopted in June. However, the DHPLG still has to produce further regulations e.g. eligibility, assessment, etc. The Serviced Sites Fund is available to provide infrastructure for local authority owned lands.

6 Notice of Question

6.1 Submitted by Councillor Conor Tormey

“Have Meath County Council applied for funding for Baltrasna/Harlockstown Road improvements?”

Response:

Meath County Council has not applied for funding for Baltrasna/Harlockstown Road improvements.

The response was noted. Dara McGowan pointed out that there was no funding scheme currently available and that the NTA had indicated that they would not fund



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

this scheme but that the planning permission was in place should funding become available.

6.2 Submitted by Councillor Amanda Smith

“Following the removal by Meath County Council of decayed wooden steps directly under Station Road L1620, what plans have Meath County Council to stop coastal erosion here?”

Response:

The steps accessing the beach from the Station Road L1620 were removed two years ago for safety reasons due to the condition of the timber steps and missing handrails.

The OPW is currently preparing a plan for regular coastal monitoring surveys to be undertaken at a number of coastal sites that are considered to be at risk of coastal flooding and or / coastal erosion . These surveys will provide important and detailed information to assist with the ongoing monitoring of local rates of coastal erosion and to inform associated risk assessments.

The response was noted.

6.3 Submitted by Councillor Darren O’Rourke

“To ask the Chief Executive if she is aware of the number of crashes and near misses at the Johnswood Road junction in Ashbourne and if she will provide details of same; if an assessment of the impact on traffic flow has at this junction been conducted after the opening the road at Millbourne Avenue has been conducted and if she will provide details of same; and if she will outline the expected timeframe for upgrading the Johnswood Road junction including the installation of new traffic lights.”

Response:

Works to address safety issues at the entrance to St Johnswood were tendered as part of a bigger project in 2018 but the tenders received were in excess of the funding available for the works at the time.



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

However, we have since made a successful funding application to the Department (Urban Regeneration & Development Fund (URDF)) to incorporate the signalisation of Johnswood junction (and Castle Street junction) into a larger scheme that also incorporates improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along the R135. These works will tie into the Main Street works completed in 2015/2016. We are currently assessing tender submissions received from consultants, for their services to develop and design these proposed works. It is proposed to tender this project again in 2020.

The response was noted. Councillor O'Rourke sought clarification on what monitoring was being undertaken since the road opening at Millbourne Avenue and requested a timeline for the design and tender for works to upgrade the junction.

Dara McGowan pointed out that €2.8 million in funding had been made available for Phase I Milltown Road, due to start early in the new year for approximately 12 months, and when completed, Main Street Phase II works, for which €5.7million funding had been allocated, would commence, to include this junction. It was pointed out by councillors that there were no safe pedestrian crossings to the school, that a light survey was needed, the road opening required monitoring and that temporary measures were needed if the necessary works were not fast-tracked.

7 Notice of Motion

7.1 Submitted by Councillor Suzanne Jamal

"Following a dramatic increase in the number of accidents occurring at Swans Cross, Oberstown in recent months, I am calling on Meath County Council to install safety measures, with particular emphasis on finding a traffic calming solution for vehicles exiting from the Ratoath Road side of the junction."

Supporting information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered:

A topographical survey of the junction has now been carried out. This survey will be used to design and assess possible safety measure options to highlight the junction to road users. When the design options have been analysed and a suitable design option is chosen, detailed design and procurement can then take place, most likely in Q4 of 2019, with approved works taking place in Q1/Q2 of 2020, subject to funding and approvals. Elected Members will be updated on progress as the project advances.



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

The motion was proposed by **Councillor Suzanne Jamal** and seconded by **Councillor Darren O'Rourke**.

The motion was adopted.

7.2 Submitted by Councillor Alan Tobin

“The new Ashbourne - Swords 197 bus route started on Sunday November 24th. There is a need for a bus stop in Greenogue as per the NTA operator’s licence. Ashbourne Municipal District Councillors call on the Transport Department to install stops as a matter of urgency.”

Supporting information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered:

The provision of bus stops and related bus stop infrastructure is a matter for bus operators and the National Transport Authority in the first instance.

Requests in relation to the provision of new bus stops and such infrastructure on the new Go-Ahead Ireland (relevant bus operator) route (Ashbourne - Swords 197) can be made directly via their email customercomment@goaheadireland.ie and to the National Transport Authority via email to info@nationaltransport.ie.

Alternatively, written communications can be made to:

- 1. Go-Ahead Ireland
Customer Care
Ballymount Road Lower
D12 X201*
- 2. National Transport Authority
Dún Scéine
Harcourt Lane
Dublin 2
D02 WT20*

The National Transport Authority and Go-Ahead have both contacted Meath County Council in relation to the Route 197 and Greenogue, with a view to identifying potential



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

locations for bus stops and to determine the extent of the infrastructure requirements necessary to provide the bus stops. Meath County Council has submitted a funding application to the National Transport Authority in this regard.

The motion was proposed by **Councillor Alan Tobin** and seconded by **Councillor Suzanne Jamal**.

Dara McGowan pointed out that the NTA had approved the provision of a bus stop at this location in principle and had asked the Council to cost the works. Due to the location, two off-line stops were costed but the NTA had indicated that they were not agreeable to fund this type of stop but would consider funding two on-line stops. Due to the nature of the road due to its width and bends, the options are currently being considered. An update will be provided as appropriate.

The motion was adopted.

7.3 Submitted by Councillor Amanda Smith

“Currently Laytown Bettystown is the only designated bathing area that is consequently subject to the requirements of the bathing water quality regulations 2008 (S.I No 79 of 2008).

I'm calling on Meath County Council to add Gormanston Beach to a designated bathing area.”

Supporting information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered:

The local authority in considering a request for the designation of new coastal waters under the Bathing Water Regulations 2008 must be satisfied that it meets the relevant criteria for classification as bathing water.

The Environmental Protection Agency have issued guidance for Local Authorities when considering such requests, and such guidance provides that as a general rule of thumb, coastal or other waters being proposed should, over the course of any day at peak periods during the course of the bathing season, have at least 50 beach users / at least 10 -15 bathers for smaller / more remote bathing areas and at least 100 beach users / at least 20 -30 bathers per day for larger / more accessible areas.



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

In the past Gormanston has not been designated, largely as there wasn't evidence of significant bathing numbers there – also there are no lifeguard or toilet facilities at this beach and scarce resources are deployed to areas of greatest footfall in terms of sampling and other associated Bathing Regulation requirements.

Beaches such as Gormanston are serviced in other respects by the local Municipal District Offices.

In the circumstance the Council have no proposals at present to have Gormanston added to the designated bathing waters areas.

The motion was proposed by **Councillor Amanda Smith** and seconded by **Councillor Alan Tobin**.

A short discussion followed on the numbers of people using the beach and the need for those using the beach to be assured of water quality and safety. A request was made that the water be tested and information be made available to beach users. It was agreed to refer this request to Environment.

The motion was noted.

7.4 Submitted by Councillor Darren O'Rourke

“That, by Friday 21st February 2020, Meath County Council will provide to elected members of the Ashbourne Municipal District a report outlining the potential routes to deliver 1) a public park of regional scale in Ashbourne town and 2) a public playground in Stamullen.

The report should:

- provide options for delivering these projects in timeframes of 2, 5 and 10 years.
- consider the potential option of acquiring lands including by compulsory purchase order given the acute shortage of publicly-owned lands in these areas
- should include the specific texts required to be included in the County Development Plan to allow for delivering these projects with minimum delay.”



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

Supporting information subject to the motion being proposed, seconded and considered:

Both of the projects referred to in this NOM are dependent on the availability of land and appropriate funding. At present there is an allocation towards both projects in the Meath County Council's capital programme, however the availability of land is a restricting factor. It will be difficult to provide timeframes for delivering different phases over 2, 5 or 10 years, as no design can commence, until land is available

In relation to the request to include these items in the County Development Plan, the Elected Members approved the public display of the draft Meath County Development Plan 2020-2026 at a Special Planning meeting on 12th November. There is no provision to make additional changes to the plan and therefore any future changes must be made as submission to the draft Plan.

The motion was proposed by **Councillor Darren O'Rourke** and seconded by **Councillor Alan Tobin**.

The motion was adopted.

8 Strategic Policy Committee & Corporate Policy Group Reports – For Information Purposes

- 8.1 To note the report from the Housing, Community and Cultural Development SPC meeting of 11th November, 2019.

The report was noted.

9 Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

10 Any Other Business

There was no other business.



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Cathaoirleach