

Minutes of Meeting of Municipal District of Stranorlar held on Tuesday 1st December 2015 in the Council Chamber, County House, Lifford, commencing at 11.00am.

Members Present:

Cllr Frank McBrearty. (Cathaoirleach)
Cllr Gary Doherty
Cllr Patrick McGowan
Cllr Gerry Crawford
Cllr Liam Doherty
Cllr Martin Harley.

Officials Present:

Joe Peoples, Director of Service, Senior Management Team
Lynda Mc Gavigan, Acting Area Manager, Housing & Corporate Services
Garrett Doherty, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Roads & Transportation.
Paul Chrity Sen. Executive Planner, Central Planning Unit.
Paddy Doherty, Divisional Manager, Community, Enterprise & Planning Services.
Martina Morris, Senior Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

81.00 Corporate Services.

81.01. Votes of Sympathy.

Members passed a vote of sympathy on the passing of:

- **Con Mc Brearty**, Kilcar - father of Martina Mc Brearty, Housing, Letterkenny, PSC.
- **Mrs. Molly Cormican** - mother of Paula Mc Cann, Income Collection Unit, Carndonagh PSC.
- **Peadar Rodgers** - Aranmore Island - father of Donna Rodgers, Human Resources, Lifford.
- **Fiona Kelly**, Ballyraine, L'kenny - granddaughter of Terry O' Doherty and niece of Aidan O' Doherty, Martin Kelly & Eunan Kelly.
- **Victor Browne**, Drumcliffe, Donegal - father of former colleague Geoffrey Browne.
- **Doreen Carlin** - sister of retired colleague Geraldine Gallagher.
- **Teresa Mc Namee**, Knockraver, Castlefin - aunt of Cllr. Gary Doherty.
- **Martin Granaghan**, Rock Road, Bundoran - Town Foreman, Bundoran.

- **Jean Christy**, Strabane, - mother of Paul Christy, Sen. Executive Planner, Lifford.
- **Seamus Lynch**, Coneyburrow, Lifford - retired soldier- formerly from Athlone.

81.02. Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Workshop (Budget) held on 6th October 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr Gerry Crawford and seconded by Cllr. Liam Doherty the minutes of the Workshop (Budget) Meeting held of the 6th October 2015 were confirmed.

81.03 Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Meeting held on 13th October 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr Gary Doherty and seconded by Cllr. Gerry Crawford the minutes of the Meeting held of the 13th October 2015 were confirmed

81.04 Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Workshop held on 13th October 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr. Paddy Mc Gowan and seconded by Cllr. Liam Doherty the minutes of the Workshop Meeting held of the 13th October 2015 were confirmed.

81.05 Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Meeting (Budget) held on the 28th October 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr. Martin Harley and seconded by Cllr. Paddy Mc Gowan, the minutes of the Stranorlar Municipal District (Budget) meeting held on the 28th October 2015 were confirmed.

81.06 Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Meeting (Budget) held 6th November 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr. Gerry Crawford and seconded by Cllr. Martin Harley, the minutes of the Stranorlar Municipal District (Budget) meeting held on the 6th November 2015 were confirmed.

81.07 Confirmation of Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar Meeting (L.E.C.P) held 11th November 2015.

On the proposal of Cllr. Gary Doherty and seconded by Cllr. Liam Doherty, the minutes of the Stranorlar Municipal District (L.E.C.P) meeting held on the 11th November 2015 were confirmed.

81:08. Confirmation of date and venue for next meeting.

Members confirmed that the next meeting of Stranorlar Municipal District would be held on *Tuesday 12th January 2016 @11.00am in the Regional Training Centre, Stranorlar.*

It was also agreed that a Workshop meeting would take place that day at 10.00 am prior to the Municipal District Meeting.

82.00 Matters Arising - Flooding

Members expressed dismay and alarm at the recent flooding of the Finn Valley Area.

While it was acknowledged by the Members that there are 3 bodies, D.C.C. the Loughs Agency and the O.P.W. with responsibility for the rivers, waterways and flood defences in Donegal - the O.P.W. has a particular responsibility and the Members expressed their anger that, despite repeated attempts being made to arrange a meeting with the O.P.W. to discuss the issue of flooding and flood defences along the Finn Valley, the O.P.W. has failed to respond positively to any of these requests.

Members were critical of the 'attitude' of the O.P.W. and their apparent reluctance to meet with elected members, and felt that a more cohesive and stronger approach should be made to the O.P.W. from all areas of the Council including the Members of Donegal County Council, the Chief Executive and Senior staff of the Council.

Members felt that the reluctance of the O.P.W. to meet with the elected members should be brought to the attention of the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Alan Kelly.

It was also suggested that, the O.P.W.'s unwillingness to meet with Public Representatives, should be brought for discussion to the Members national forum - the A.I.L.G (Association of Irish Local Government).

They requested that the Chief Executive would also raise this issue with the C.C.M.A. (County and City Management Association) on a national basis.

It was pointed out that the flooding is not solely a matter for the O.P.W. to deal with, nor is it solely a matter of major concern for the Finn Valley, but, it is a much wider issue for the Country as a whole, and one which needs a much more co-ordinated, Inter- Agency response on a National basis.

Members appealed to the local T.D's etc to, not only highlight the issue nationally, but, to raise the issue at an E.U. level and to apply to the E.U for funding to provide both remedial & prevention measures.

In the meantime, on a local basis, it was felt that the Council should seek to identify measures that could be undertaken to help alleviate flooding in the Finn Valley, for which, funding may be available from the O.P.W. under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works Scheme.

The Members acknowledged that the Council has a responsibility to maintain and clear drainage systems in the various towns & villages etc, and, should be moving towards creating a Capital Programme to deal with the issue of flooding along areas of 'flood plain', particularly in the Finn Valley.

The issue of dredging the river also needs to be looked at and should form part of the discussions with the other agencies - the Loughs Agency and the O.P.W.

Mr. Peoples, D.O.S. acknowledged that the Council should be emphasising that flooding is a major issue for all Areas of the Council and not just the Stranorlar Area, and should challenge the O.P.W. by highlighting flooding as a key issue for D.C.C.

D.C.C. should also seek to engage both Minister Kelly & Minister Harris as part of its current debate on infrastructure funding etc.

A proposal to make a formal protest to the O.P.W. on behalf of the Stranorlar Municipal District, by the Members physically going as 'a body', to hand -in a letter of complaint to the local O.P.W. offices in Lifford, was agreed in principle by the Members, but, in view of comments subsequently made by Mr. Peoples, it was agreed to postpone such action until after the meeting on Infrastructure Development Funding (Workshop) due to be held on Wednesday 9th December 2015.

83.00. Housing Services.

83.01. Social Housing Reports.

Members noted the contents of the reports circulated with the Agenda, and, presented by Ms. Lynda Mc Gavigan, Acting Area Manager, Housing /Corporate.

Ms. Mc Gavigan stated that since the report had issued to the Members a further 7 no. houses had been offered to prospective tenants:

These houses are at: Stranorlar (1), Raphoe (1), Castlefin (3) and Killygordon (2).

She advised that the proposed sale of 3 no. houses (Round 1) as previously agreed by the Municipal District Members had been put to the last full Council meeting for approval (Section 183) and had been approved by the Members. It

is hoped to proceed to offer 3 more houses (Tranche 2) for sale, in the New Year.

Members queried why 2 no. houses at **Railway Ave, Killygordon**, have each been refused by 7 no. prospective tenants and expressed their doubts about the possibility of a 3rd house (now under offer) being accepted.

In reply, Ms. Mc Gavigan indicated that the main reason for these refusals is that people have changed their preference for location. However, despite this, she is hopeful that the offer of the 3rd house at Railway Ave will be accepted. Members recognised that there are problems at this particular location, but pointed to the fact that a Residents Association has now been set up at Railway Ave and its members are anxious to meet with the Council to discuss how to address the issues in the estate.

Ms Mc Gavigan stated the Council would welcome the resident's involvement and any suggestions they may have to help 'put this estate back on its feet again'.

Members questioned if the offer of houses is being targeted at those likely to accept, as, they found it difficult to believe that there isn't someone on the list who would be willing to accept these houses.

Ms. Mc Gavigan acknowledged that there are people out there who would be willing to accept these houses but, who, for one reason or another are further down the list (smaller family unit or on list for shorter period). However, it may now have come to the point that these people will receive an offer, as, applicants further up the list continue to refuse offers or change their preference for location.

On a wider issue, the Members queried whether the change in preference of location is being used in a systematic way by applicants as a means to keep RAS entitlements etc, and, what if any, deterrent is there against the system being used in this way.

In response Ms. Mc Gavigan clarified the situation in relation to the refusal of an applicant to accept an offer of a Council house. She stated that the policy is that, an applicant may make 2 refusals in the space of one year without incurring any penalty for doing so.

In response to various queries the Members were advised of the following:

- **H.A.P** - 368 applications in Donegal - 46 in Stranorlar Municipal District. Council is now proceeding to move people on Rent Supplement over to HAP.
- **Phase 1 Energy & Efficiency Programme - Insulation** - 439 units completed this year - 88 of these in Stranorlar Municipal District - it is hoped to complete more units next year.
In response to query from Members, Ms. Mc Gavigan indicated that an update on the estates next in line for upgrade would be circulated to the Members and indicated that some old S.I. cottages may be included in the programme.
- **Phase 2 of the Energy Efficiency programme - Windows & Doors** - Dept have advised that phase 1 (Insulation) has to be completed before phase 2 may be introduced.
- **New Tenant Purchase Scheme** - full details of proposed scheme are not available yet but there will be Income Limits applicable to the scheme. Shared Ownership Houses will not be eligible for Tenant Purchase Scheme.

84.00 Community, Enterprise & Cultural Services.

Members noted the content of the report circulated and presented by Mr. Paddy Doherty.

84.01. Drumboe Walkway.

Mr. P. Doherty confirmed that the E.T.B has approved the proposed walkway and the matter was back with D.C.C. for progression.

84.02. Ballybofey/Stranorlar Development HUB.

In response to queries from the Members, regarding the Sport 4 Life Sports Conference & Expo which took place in the Finn Valley Centre, Stranorlar, from 13th -15th November 2015, Mr. Doherty emphasised that this was the first year such an event had been held and felt that it was something to build on for the future. In the meantime, the staging of this event is being reviewed, with a view to holding it again next year as a means of promoting the Finn Valley Centre as a 'centre of excellence' for Sport.

84.03. Peace IV.

Mr. Doherty confirmed that work is on-going on the preparation of the Local Area Plans under Peace IV and it is hoped to launch the Peace IV Programme in December. It is also proposed to meet with the Members of Derry City and Strabane District Council, in the near future, to discuss projects of mutual interest such as the Riverine Project.

85.00. Environmental Services.

Members expressed their disappointment that there was no representative from Environmental Services at the meeting, and also queried why there was no report or update presented to the Members on works/ issues being dealt with in the Area by Environmental Services Section.

In response, Mr. Peoples indicated that there would be someone from the Environmental Services Section, present at the next meeting of the Stranorlar Municipal District, and that regular reports/updates should be available to the Members in future.

86.00. Roads & Transportation.

Members noted the contents of the report circulated, and presented by, Mr. Garrett Doherty.

The following issues were highlighted by Members:

- **Bridge at Ballindrait** - safety concerns regarding the wall at the bridge - new wall has been put back in the same location as the old wall - opportunity to alleviate an existing danger has been missed.
- **Street Lighting @ Main St, Ballybofey** - Members indicated that the public lights need to be brighter along the Main Street, and a light which was to be erected outside Bradys café was never put up resulting in a 'gap' in the public lighting at this point.
- **Dooneyloop Chapel** - ongoing issue with flooding on the road at this location.

- **Murlog Chapel** - the road surface from the traffic lights to Murlog Chapel needs repair.
- **Footpath** - Members proposed that the Council should consider the possibility of designing a footpath to run from **Finn Harps ground to Sessiaghoneill Bridge**.

86.01. Meenglass Rd, Ballybofey.

The transport of materials from quarry to the ongoing works at Blackburn Bridge continues to cause serious damage to Meenglass Rd - members want assurances that monies will be available to repair this road when works are completed.

In response, Mr. Doherty acknowledged that the Council have contacted the N.R.D.O. and Roads Central Division in relation to this matter and have carried out a survey the road, which identified that a 900m stretch has deteriorated significantly. The Council will continue to monitor the condition of the road and will pass the information on to the N.R.D.O. and the contractor working on site.

86.02. Castlefin Bridge.

Members queried why if Part 8 Planning Permission was obtained for this project (North & South side of the bridge) was it going through a design stage again for the proposed works on the North side of the bridge.

In response, Mr. Doherty stated that the drawings prepared at that time were for planning purposes only and more detailed drawings of the works involved were now needed. He stated that while the works carried out on the South side were relatively straight forward, the works required on the North side presented a complex engineering project which will require significant funding - funding which may be beyond the scope of the Municipal District to provide from its limited resources. He indicated that the MD Roads office would meet with Road Design and Planning before the year end to discuss this matter further and he would address this issue again at the next Municipal Area meeting in January 2016.

86.03. Logues Bridge.

Members queried if there are plans for re-alignment of the road as part of the proposed works and expressed concern at the slow progress being made on this project.

In response Mr. Doherty stated that there were 2 options being considered here - one option was simply to remove the existing deck of the bridge and replace it, but, this would only allow single lane traffic over the bridge. The

second option was an off-line replacement which would be more expensive but may allow for two lanes of traffic.

He stated the cost of the design work itself for this project will be significant

86.04. Blackburn Bridge.

It was proposed that the NRA, the Dept and Senior Council Officials be requested to examine the possibility of reducing the speed limit at Cappry on the approach to the Blackburn Bridge - a reduction in the speed limit should be considered for safety reasons at this location.

Members also identified the possible risk of flooding at this location as a result of the works now being undertaken - adjacent land now so well drained that water will no longer lie in the fields and will flow more quickly to the road - this could be an issue in the future.

86.05. Flooding & Signage.

It was acknowledged by Members that they already had a lengthy discussion on the issue of the recent flooding in the Finn Valley Area, but, they sought some more detailed information from Mr. Doherty in relation to the role of the Roads Dept in such an event.

- **Sand bags** - Members requested that a stockpile of empty sandbags be kept available for emergency situations. There appeared to have been a lack of availability of sand bags during the recent emergency.
Mr. Doherty replied that the Area will now keep 1,000 sand bags at each depot
(200 of which will be filled with sand) for distribution in an emergency.
- **Signage** - In response to queries from the Members, Mr. Doherty stated that, where it is not possible to keep a public roadway open the Roads Dept should erect signage to warn the members of the public regarding the possible danger and the closure of the road/roads in question.
- **On call** - Mr. Doherty stated that each overseer has 2 men and a pick-up available to deal with 'out of hour's' calls and that 99% of the time this level of cover would be adequate, as most emergency calls would relate to traffic accidents etc.

It was pointed out that, if people feel their lives are at risk from an emergency situation, such as flooding, their first port of call should be to the Emergency Services.

87.00. Planning & Economic Development.

Members noted the content of the report circulated with the Agenda

87.01. Unfinished Estates.

There was a detailed discussion regarding the ongoing works and proposed works at **Cathedral Hill, Raphoe**, and, while Planning were relatively happy with the progress made to date, it was admitted that problems still remain to be resolved on this estate, and in fact, the detailed survey carried out had thrown up some more issues. However, despite this, and the fact that there are other issues with the site, Planning staff remained hopeful that they would be in a position to advertise the major works contract for tender before the end of the year.

87.02. Taking in Charge of Residential Housing Developments.

Frank Sweeney, Ex. Planner presented a detailed report to the Members outlining the names and locations of all the estates in the Stranorlar Municipal Area, for which an application for taking-in-charge had been received, and, indicated the progress made on each application to date.

In response to question raised by Members, Frank Sweeney indicated that, to date, Donegal County Council has not taken charge of any Estate, but, he is confident that up to 7 Estates in the Stranorlar Area could be taken over in the next few months as Planning are preparing to issue the Public Notice regarding take-over for these estates shortly.

Mr. Sweeney outlined the current position in relation to the 27 Estates, identified in his report for the Stranorlar Area, which had applied to be taken in charge - details are as follows;

Tranche 1 – Public Notice to Issue – 7 no.		
Caisleain Court, Castlefin	Manor Court, Townparks, Convoy	
Admiran, (Gildea - 102 houses)	Townview, Heights, Ballybofey	
Carrick,Crescent, Donegal Rd, Ballybofey	Blackrock Drive, Ballybofey	
An Clairin, Killygordon		

Tranche 2 – Likely to Progress to Public Notice following works/ further negotiation – 14 no.		
The Meadows, Townparks, Convoy	Beechwood Grove, Lifford	Sessiagh Park, Sessiaghallison, Castlefin
Rossgier Close, Rossgier, Lifford	Blue Cedars, Ballybofey	Ash Meadows, Drumboe, Stranorlar
Radharc Na Coille, Drumkeen	*Hazelwood Drive, Lifford	Beechwood Park, Kiltyal, Convoy
Berryfields, L'kenny Rd, Stranorlar	*St. Judes Court, Lifford	Flaxfields, Convoy
Ard Mhuillean, Milltown, Convoy	Beechwood Grove, Convoy	

*Note: Schemes to be regarded as a single entity for taking in charge and while there are major issues to be resolved members felt Council should try to progress take-over process as quickly as possible.

Tranche 3 – Significant works to be completed – 6 no		
Millview, Ballindrait, Lifford	Greenfields, Broad Rd, Convoy	Cathedral Hill, Raphoe
Mullindrait, Ballybofey	Alainn,Admiran, Stranorlar (8 houses)	Beechwood Park, Lifford

There was a query regarding **2 no. housing estates in the St. Johnston** area which were not included in the report, and it was agreed that they would be added to the list for the next meeting, and in the meantime, the Members would be informed by e-mail of the current situation in relation to the take-over of these two estates.

Members thanked Mr. Sweeney for his detailed report but felt that it would be better from now on, if the report could be colour-coded into the various phases, and that the schemes be grouped according to their location.

In response to a general query raised by members regarding the take-over of sewage systems etc in private estates by Irish Water, it was stated that Irish Water will take over estates that are connected to the Public network once these estates have been taken in charge by the Council. It was pointed out that, a large number of the estates in the Stranorlar Area that have applied for take-over, are connected to a public sewer.

88.00. Notices of Motion.

88.01. Footpath on N13 Letterkenny Road.

The following motion was submitted and proposed by Cllr. Martin Harley and seconded by Cllr. Paddy Mc Gowan.

'That this municipal district put in place the footpath on the N-13 Letterkenny road past Admiran Park out as far as the 50km signs as was indicated in planning permission no 01/8074 in accordance with planning permission T93/1479 and draw down any bonds that are in place to assist with the works'.

The Members were informed that: The Planning Permissions referenced are over 14 and 22 years old respectively, the Stranorlar Roads Office will therefore need to request a copy of the original planning permission granted to determine details of any proposed footpath and development charge levied at the time of grant. Given the historical nature of the planning permissions referenced it is unlikely that any development charge levied at the time of grant will be available now as a source of funding to complete the proposed works. It is therefore likely that an alternative source of funding will have to be identified to allow completion of the proposed works. From an initial examination the proposed works may satisfy the criteria for funding under Historical Development Charge Grants which the Stranorlar MD receives intermittently from Roads Central.

The Stranorlar Roads Office will clarify all of the above and confirm to members details of the planning permission granted and any possible sources of funding available now or in the future to allow the proposed works to be completed.

88.02. Remedial Works - Flooding

The following motion was submitted and proposed by Cllr. Gary Doherty and seconded by Cllr. Liam Doherty.

'That this Municipal District immediately engages with the OPW, The Loughs Agency and Derry City and Strabane Council to discuss any remedial works to be carried out to address flooding concerns in the area'.

The Members were informed that: The Municipal District will write to the four bodies mentioned outlining the content of this motion after it is adopted. The identification of specific remedial works and the funding thereof is quite a

broad matter. The Council has a very limited role in dealing with the type of flooding recently experienced in the Finn Valley and elsewhere. However, it is happy to facilitate engagement with bodies and any measures that can assist. The OPW may be best placed to take the lead role in identifying any remedial flood control measures within the catchments.

89.00. Correspondence.

89.01. Letter received from O.P.W. dated 09/10/2015.

Members acknowledged receipt of the above letter and queried if any further correspondence had been received.

They were advised that no other correspondence or contact had been received from the O.P.W. to date.

90.00. Members Written Questions.

90.01. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Gary Doherty.

'Can I have a full list of all staff delegated solely to the Stranorlar Municipal District across all Departments?'

Cllr. Doherty was informed that there is currently 67 staff assigned to the Stranorlar Municipal District, across all services, broken down as follows:

- 45 Outdoor Staff
- 12 Clerical / Administrative Staff.
- 7 Technical / Engineering Staff.
- 3 Area Managers.

In addition to the above, we also have a complement of 9 retained fire service personnel based in the Stranorlar Fire Station.

90.02. The following question was submitted by Cllr. Gary Doherty.

'Can I have a list of the numbers on the housing waiting list for each town?'

Cllr. Doherty was informed that the table below outlines the preferences for all approved applicants on the housing list for the Municipal District of Stranorlar:

Town	No. of Applicants	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed
Ballindrait	8	1	4	3	0	0
Ballybofey	193	1	132	55	4	1
Castlefin	42	0	29	12	1	0
Cloghan	4	0	3	1	0	0
Convoy	52	0	35	16	1	0
Drumkeen	13	0	9	3	1	0
Killygordon	17	0	12	5	0	0
Lifford	94	1	63	28	2	0
Liscooley	1	0	1	0	0	0
Porthall	13	0	11	2	0	0
Raphoe	60	1	36	21	2	0
St. Johnston	46	1	32	8	5	0
Stranorlar	119	0	78	38	3	0
TOTAL	662	5	445	192	19	1

This concluded the business of the Meeting.

Area Manager,
Municipal District of Stranorlar.

Cathaoirleach,
Municipal District of Stranorlar.