

Minutes of the July Meeting of the Municipal District of Callan-Thomastown

Date: Wednesday 13th July, 2022 at 4.00p.m.

Venue: Meeting conducted via MS Teams remote access.

Chair: Cllr Matt Doran

Present via MS Teams Cllr Peter Chap Cleere, Cllr Deirdre Cullen, Cllr Michael Doyle, Cllr Joe Lyons, Cllr Patrick O'Neill.

In attendance via MS Teams: Ms Mary Mulholland, Director of Services; Ms Caitriona O'Sullivan, Executive Planner; Mr Frank Stafford, Senior Engineer; Ms Carmel Brett, Staff Officer.

Apologies: Ms Anne Marie Shortall, Senior Executive Officer; Mr Declan Murphy, Area Engineer.

1) Confirmation of Minutes

(a) Minutes of the Municipal District meeting of Wednesday 8th June, 2022 and the Annual meeting of Wednesday 8th June, 2022.

The minutes of the June meeting and the Annual meeting of the Municipal District held on Wednesday 8th June 2022 were proposed by Cllr Cullen, seconded by Cllr Cleere and agreed.

2) Consideration of Reports and Recommendations

(a) Update on derelict sites (Caitriona O'Sullivan)

Ms C O'Sullivan, Executive Planner, updated the members on the current status of derelict and vacant sites, and briefed them on the new Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT).

Restructuring of the Planning Section has brought these measures together under an active land management initiative designed to encourage activation of appropriate land.

Ms O'Sullivan explained what constitutes a derelict site, what powers are available to the Local Authority to deal with them and the process involved, saying there are currently 13 sites on the Derelict Sites Register, none of which are in the Callan-Thomastown Municipal District.

There are however 11 sites on Derelict Sites Tracker which are under investigation.

Action will be on a phased and strategic basis with priority given first to Kilkenny City followed by Ferrybank, the district towns, rural towns and villages, then rural areas.

She said sites can be entered on both the vacant sites register and the derelict sites register, allowing levies of 7% of the market value of the property can be applied – however only one levy can be applied.

The new RZLT will be administered by Revenue, this at a rate of 3% of market value.

Ms O'Sullivan said the process of having the sites on the register valued was ongoing, as was awareness raising, updating the Council website with relevant information and introducing an information leaflet to help correspond with property owners.

The Cathaoirleach and members thanked Ms O'Sullivan and the following items were raised:

- Lengthy Compulsory Purchase Order process;
- Properties without services cannot be levied for RZLT;
- Vacant or derelict properties which are suitable for housing can be acquired under Housing legislation if appropriate;
- It is not the preferred option for KCC to enter, carry out repair works and then recoup costs retrospectively, this is only done to prevent unauthorised access and render a site safe.

(b) Updates on potential for pedestrian bridges in Bennettsbridge and Graiguenamanagh (Frank Stafford)

Mr. Frank Stafford, Senior Engineer Projects Office, gave the members an update on recreational infrastructure.

He said the Graiguenamanagh/Tinnahinch Tourism and Recreational Project Concept Study, which was finalised in 2019, identified the need for new pedestrian bridges over the River Barrow to help grow and develop the town as a tourism destination. He also advised that actions and objectives within the Tourism and Recreational Project Concept Study informed elements of the recently adopted Graiguenamanagh/Tinnahinch Local Area Plan. It was noted the provision of the bridges would aid with the development of The River Park on the Tinnahinch side, open up new heritage and recreational trails, linking the Barrow Way with the Brandon Hill walks and Silaire Loop walk. It was noted the delivery of two bridges was ambitious, but the brand of Graiguenamanagh as a tourism destination had really grown in recent years with the development of the Outdoor Activity Hub, water sports offering and the increased demand for adventure tourism. The provision of these bridges will open up new areas allowing the town to build on its current tourism offering.

It was clarified that the Tourism and Recreational Project Concept Study is a non-statutory document that sets out a roadmap on how its objectives can be delivered should funding become available to deliver the actions contained within. Mr. Stafford then gave an update on the Design Options Report for the 2no. Pedestrian Bridges over the River Barrow and concluded by saying he anticipated having a draft Design Options Report, with 3 CGI options for each proposed structure, in Q3 2022 Mr. Stafford advised that this report was separate to the study currently being undertaken by the Area Office on the George Semple Bridge to determine how best to improve the connectivity over same.

Mr Stafford also gave an update on the Bennettsbridge Riverside Amenity Area and Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study and Design Options Report, advising that the Consultants had now been appointed and that works had commenced on same. He noted that the consultants were tasked to consider the following under the design brief: (a) A riverside amenity or amenities with access to the river for water-based activities, (b) the construction of a new pedestrian/cyclist bridge over the River Nore and (c) modifications to the existing structure to cater for pedestrians/cyclists. To date Mr. Stafford advised a preliminary study area had been identified for consideration with preliminary bridge location options. He advised that the next step was to engage with the key landowners within the area identified for consideration and that he expected this will happen towards the end of the month, noting the outcome of these discussions will inform the next steps taken.

(c) Update on Greenway connection from St. Mullins to New Ross (Frank Stafford)

An update was also provided on the Recreational Connectivity Link between Woodstock Estate and the South East Greenway – Feasibility Study & Route Selection Report. The meeting was advised the successful tender was tasked with providing a design solution that delivers a safe cycle and walking route for visitors and local communities that connects

Woodstock Estate/Insitioge with the new South East Greenway along its Raheen to Mount Elliott section, near New Ross. In order to maximise the potential to attract visitors in significant numbers to the proposed Woodstock Link, the design team are required to put forward a number of trail options that will be reasonably easy to travel along in terms of gradients, be attractive in terms of setting and points of interest and most importantly feel safe for a variety of users. Mr. Stafford advised he expected the draft feasibility study to be finalised mid-August.

He went on to say that the emerging Preferred Options will be presented to the public as part of a non-statutory consultation and the outcome of same will feed into the final decision on the preferred option. However, prior to this the consultants will engage with the landowners along the various options.

Mr. Stafford said, to put the scale of the project into context, the South East Greenway (New Ross to Waterford) is 24km's long and is located along the defined route corridor of the disused railway line. This new proposed link is 16km in length will most likely need to transverse both private farmland, forestry and is located within the SAC.

Mr. Stafford also informed the members that tender for consultancy services to progress the Nore Valley Walk Linkage Project- Feasibility Study & Route Selection Report was advertised recently and that he expected the successful tenderer to be appointed in September or October this year.

Mr. Stafford concluded by advising the meeting that the works proposed for all 4 projects were at a very early stage. He noted the particular challenges associated with each project in that all were within areas of special conservation, the proximity to protected structures in some cases, landownership issues and the task ahead to obtain the necessary planning and funding approvals. But he concluded by saying the outcome of these studies will (a) identify the projects that are feasible for progression and (b) if deemed feasible, will position us to take the next steps in terms of obtaining planning etc.

The Cathaoirleach and members thanked Mr Stafford and the following items were raised:

- Timeframe for completion of Bennettsbridge study and report is four to six months approximately;
- Timeline for the three CGI options for each of the structures in Graiguenamanagh is Q3 2022
- Options report on pedestrian bridges in Graiguenamanagh is separate to reports also being compiled regarding the existing George Semple bridge.

(d) Monthly Rural Development Update (Mary Mulholland)

Ms Mary Mulholland informed the members that the transfer of the Callan Friary complex from the Augustinian Order to Kilkenny County Council is now complete and the Order have requested a walk-through of the property.

It is envisaged that a steering group will meet during August to arrange the process of compiling assessment reports and thereafter public consultation.

A number of expressions of interest has been received regarding Town & Village Renewal Scheme, two from this Municipal District - Paulstown and Glenmore.

The Streetscape Enhancement Scheme for which Callan is the nominated town has been suspended by the Department and there is not currently an update as to when it will recommence

3) Business prescribed by Statute, Standing Orders or Resolutions of the Municipal District members for transaction of such meeting.

There were no items for discussion

4) **Other business set forth in the Notice convening the meeting**

There were no items for discussion

5) **Notices of Motion**

There were no items for discussion

6) **Correspondence**

There were no items for discussion

7) **Any other Business**

There were no items for discussion

This concluded the business of the meeting at 17.06pm

Chairperson: Max Doran 14-09-2022