

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

Date: Wednesday 13th March, 2024 at 4.00p.m.

Venue: Via remote access MS Teams

Chair: Cllr D Cullen

Present: Cllr Peter Chap Cleere, Cllr Matt Doran, Cllr Michael Doyle, Cllr Joe Lyons

In attendance: Fiona Deegan, Director of Services; Anne Marie Shortall, Meetings Administrator; Mr Declan Murphy, Area Engineer; Ms Bernadette Moloney, Biodiversity Officer; Ms Carmel Brett, Staff Officer.

Apologies: Cllr Patrick O'Neill

1) Confirmation of Minutes

(a) Minutes of the Municipal District meeting of Wednesday 14th February, 2024.

The minutes of the February meeting of the Municipal District held on Wednesday 14th February 2024 were adopted, proposed by Cllr Matt Doran and seconded by Cllr Michael Doyle.

2) Consideration of Reports and Recommendations

(a) County Biodiversity Action Plan (Bernadette Moloney)

Ms Bernadette Moloney, Biodiversity Officer Kilkenny County Council, updated the members on the background to and intended timeline for formulation of a Biodiversity Action Plan for Kilkenny.

She outlined the duties involved in the new role of Biodiversity Officer, primarily to develop and implement a Biodiversity Forum and a Biodiversity Action Plan.

It is envisaged that this plans timeline, commenced in March with preparation of a discussion paper (circulated to the members), will facilitate community engagement, establishment of a biodiversity action group, development of an Action Plan followed by a public consultation process, and ending with the Plan being presented for endorsement by the end of the year.

Ms Moloney summarised the variety of questions raised in the discussion paper and said research and data collection would focus on recording the Irish Mayfly, assessment of the River Nore as a pollinator corridor and surveys of the Night Jar and Barn Owl.

Staff training modules will be developed, procedures which may impact on biodiversity will be reviewed, and biodiversity policy will be developed based on scientific research.

Activities running from May to August under the Citizen Science Programme 2024 were listed. Ms Moloney emphasised the importance of education programmes and the Tidy Towns Forum in understanding and promoting biodiversity.

The Heritage Council and National Parks & Wildlife Service are providing funding for 2024 to the amount of €119,500, with the Local Authority providing €24,100, thus total 2024 available funding is €143,600.

The elected members thanked Ms Moloney for her presentation and wished her well in her new role as Biodiversity Officer.

(b) Roadworks Programme 2024 (Declan Murphy)

Mr. Declan Murphy gave a presentation to the members on the proposed 2024 Roadworks Programme, saying the Municipal District had an overall budget in excess of €9.1m for Regional, Local and National Roads Maintenance.

Mr Murphy outlined the breakdown of funding for Restoration Improvement, Restoration Maintenance, Discretionary Grant, Drainage, Routine Maintenance of Regional and Local Roads, Community Involvement Scheme, Low Cost Safety Schemes, Bridge Rehabilitation, Climate Change Adaption and Resilience Works, National Road Maintenance (excluding TII Schemes), National Road N76 Bypass and Local MD Fund for 2024.

Local Improvement Scheme budgets not yet confirmed.

Based on current list and budget there will be three projects offered under the Community Involvement in roadworks Scheme.

Cllr Cullen thanked Mr Murphy for his consultation with the programme and members raised the following items:

- Extra funding required to make progress with decreasing the large number of pending applications on the Community Involvement Scheme;
- Low Cost Safety Scheme also requires increased funding to help combat the increasing number of road traffic incidents.

The Roadworks Programme 2024 was then adopted, proposed by Cllr Matt Doran and seconded by Cllr Joe Lyons.

(c) Monthly Roads Update (Declan Murphy)

Mr D. Murphy, Area Engineer, updated the members on the following roads related matters, saying the 2024 Roadworks Programme has just commenced:

- Locations were listed of Restoration Improvements under Road Works Programme 2024 which commenced 11th March;
- Restoration Improvement works scheduled for week commencing 8th April listed;
- Footpath works Phase 1 completed on Carrick Road, Kilmoganny;
- Footpath works ongoing at the Church, Bennettsbridge;

The members thanked Mr. Murphy for his update and raised the following items:

- Cllr Cullen brought to the attention of the members correspondence received from residents of Kiltorcan, Derrynahinch, Knockwilliam and Main Street, Ballyhale outlining concerns regarding their estimated increase in numbers of tipper and articulated trucks travelling on the roads within the geographical area of their residences since November 2023 and its effect on them.
Issuing a written request to Directors of Services T Butler and S McKeown to investigate these concerns was proposed by Cllr Cullen and seconded by Cllr Doyle.

D Murphy said he is aware of some issues in the areas - a local side road is currently being repaired and a junction is scheduled for repair in the coming weeks. Maintenance issues will be addressed as they arise and some other roads issues can be addressed in the forthcoming 3-year programme. Any issue regarding potential increase in the number of HGVs utilising the roads following a Planning decision would fall outside the remit of Roads and the area office.

- Cllr Lyons requested an update on Active Travel works on Upper Bridge Street Callan – D Murphy replied that most recent information indicated a delay of six weeks leading to an expected commencement date for works of early April, this will be followed up for clarification;
- Cllr Lyons requested for “Callan Town Centre next junction” signage to be erected on N76 at the first exit from Kilkenny on Callan Bypass, D Murphy said he will follow up with TII to advance signage for this location;
- Cllr Cleere observed that 2024 budget allocation is not sufficient for the road lengths in the Municipal District, D Murphy said increased materials costs together with more rapid deterioration of road surfaces due to climate change induced increased rainfall has led to a reduction in the amount of works which can be completed with budget available.

(d) Monthly Rural Development Update (Anne Marie Shortall)

Ms Anne Marie Shortall said the Events grants are currently being assessed prior to being presented to the elected members, the Local Enhancement grant will be presented to the LCDC for consideration.

The Community and Cultural Facilities Capital Scheme (CCFCS) will be advertised in the coming weeks, seeking projects ready to be commenced with planning permission granted.

Closing date for calls for expression of interest for the Town & Village Project Development Measure 3 is 13th March 2024.

The Heritage Council are currently accepting applications for the Community Heritage Grant Scheme 2024 from community groups, further information or assistance can be sought from Regina Fitzpatrick, Heritage Officer or from the Heritage Council.

Ms Shortall said works are scheduled to commence on the Thomastown Library on 19th March, and communities in the area have been informed accordingly.

The members thanked Ms Shortall for her update.

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

- Ms Anne Marie Shortall clarified the response received from Minister O'Donovan regarding flooding issues in Callan had concluded that these do not fall within the remit of the OPW.
D Murphy added the silt mounds were found not to have an effect on flooding so Kilkenny County Council, as the landowner, applied for funding support under the minor mitigation works scheme for bigger pumps and storage units, but would persist with efforts to attain some flood alleviation works.
Members noted the Minister was not planning a site visit and would monitor the issue until Summer.
- Correspondence received by Cllr Cullen from residents of Kiltorcan, Derrynahinch, Knockwilliam and Main Street, Ballyhale was discussed under Item 2 (c)

7) Any other Business

There were no items for discussion

This concluded the business of the meeting

Chairperson: 