

**MINUTES OF ATHLONE** Municipal District **HELD IN THE LOUGHNANEANE** Suite - Áras an Chontae, Roscommon, **ON MONDAY**, 15th January, 2018 **AT 10.00** am

**PRESENT:** Councillor Tony Ward, Cathaoirleach **PRESIDED**

**MEMBERS:** Cllr I. Connaughton, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr P. Kilduff and Cllr J. Naughten.

**OFFICIALS:** Diarmuid MacDonnacha, Athlone Municipal District Co-ordinator  
Cait Kenny, Assistant Staff Officer  
Paul Browne, Executive Engineer  
John O'Rourke, Senior Engineer

**Apologies:**

**1.1 APOLOGIES**

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The Cathaoirleach Cllr. Ward welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2018. He advised the meeting that Ms. Majella Hunt, Director of Services was unable to attend and Mr. John O'Rourke was in attendance to deputise.

**2.1 DRAFT ATHLONE JOINT RETAIL STRATEGY - (ATHLONE MD- MONKSLAND)**

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Mr. Martin Lydon, A/Director of Services gave an overview of the draft Athlone Joint Retail Strategy prepared for Roscommon & Westmeath County Councils by Consultants MacCabe Durney Barnes. He said it is one of the key recommendations of the Report of the Athlone Boundary Review Committee and it is intended that the Strategy will be adopted as a Variation to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014 and the Monksland/Bellanamulia Local Area Plan 2016. It will also inform the preparation of the next County Development Plans and the Joint Athlone Local Area Plan.

Mr. Lydon outlined the key items from the draft plan:

- Objectives and policies will not change.
- Potential for another anchor tenant at Monksland.
- Document setup to safeguard this.
- Happy that no erosion regarding retail.
- Roscommon County Council has no wish to take shopping from Athlone Town.

Ms. Mary Grier, Senior Planner outlined the following points in relation to the draft plan:

- The Regional Planning Guidelines for West Region adopted in 2010 which included a retail strategy were considered as part of this report. This report delivers on the aspirations of the RPG2010.
- Population analysis – Census figures suggest rate of population growth is slower than expected.
- Chapter 7 is of significant importance and echoes what is already in the Monksland Area Plan.
- It is proposed to use existing retail warehouses to accommodate new retail warehouse proposals.

Mr. Lydon outlined that an in-camera meeting with Athlone MD Members, Westmeath was also taking place this week. The next stage is an in-camera meeting between Athlone MD Westmeath, Athlone MD Roscommon and MacCabe Durney Barnes Consultants.

The members raised the following in relation to the draft plan:

- Welcome second retail unit given that Monksland and Roscommon Town are same size. This will reduce level of traffic crossing Shannon.
- Access is limited by a number of inadequate junctions which could constrain the provision of new access points and the level of additional traffic which could be accommodated.

- The existing M6/N61 junctions are nearing capacity and future commercial and residential development in the M/BLAP area will put additional pressures on capacity and increase road safety issues.
- Re-opening of Colaiste Chiarain will increase traffic on the R446 and can see this as a major congestion area. It was noted that the School is situated on a 28 acre space that has potential to be used as a theatre during out of school hours.
- Members concerned that Boundary Issue has not gone away and queried if there was a requirement for a Joint Athlone Local Area Plan (JALAP) or a Joint Retail Strategy. Their main concern was that they could be signing part of Roscommon away.

Mr. Lydon responded as follows:

- Further improvements are required to improve junctions. The Athlone West Strategic Transport Assessment which is currently being prepared will provide recommendations concerning infrastructure upgrades which Roscommon County Council will be able to progress subject to funding.
- Mary Grier, Senior Planner advised that Pre-planning meeting with Department of Education and their consultants will need to consider traffic along the route as part of planning application.
- Westmeath County Council are commencing work on a Local Area Plan for Athlone. Mr. Lydon said our priority should be moving Monksland into a Tier 1. Monksland in Roscommon will remain as a Tier 2.

Mr. Lydon advised members that the Athlone Joint Retail Strategy is the minor element of the Athlone Boundary Report and outlined that the JALAP space is where we need to be ambitious for Monksland.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward  
**SECONDED** by Cllr. Fallon

Members unanimously **AGREED** with the Draft Athlone Joint Retail Strategy. It was further agreed to hold an in-camera meeting with Athlone MD Westmeath and MacCabe Durney Barnes Consultants predominantly to discuss the Joint Retail Strategy with a brief agenda item to outline Roscommon County Council's intention to co-operate with Westmeath County Council to draft a Joint Athlone Local Area Plan.

### **3.1 REVISION OF ATHLONE MD FUNDING SCHEME 2018**

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John O'Rourke, A/ Director of Services referred members to the 2017 Scheme Guidelines and Application Form previously circulated to Members. He advised Members that there was a budget of **€85,000** for 2018 and an additional **€15,000** carried over from 2017 giving a total budget of **€100,000**. He invited proposals for any changes to the existing Scheme.

The members agreed on the following:

- **€50,000** to be ring-fenced for Match Funded Projects and **€50,000** for Standard Projects.
- Groups that got funding in 2017 should not be a priority for funding in 2018.
- There will be two calls this year for Applications with one call in Quarter 1 and another in Quarter 3.
- First call for funding to be advertised in local papers and social media on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018.


John O'Rourke advised members that he would make the relevant changes and the 2018 Athlone MD Project Funding Scheme would be advertised in the local papers and social media from Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

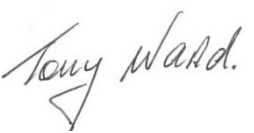
**NEXT MEETING**


The next meeting will be on Monday, 15th January, 2018.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are  
Confirmed and Signed:

  
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Meetings Administrator

  
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Cathaoirleach

  
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Countersigned