



**Minutes of Rathkeale Area Committee Meeting
Held in Rathkeale House Hotel, Rathkeale,
on 6th March, 2006 – 12p.m.**

Present In the Chair : Councillor D. Naughton.

Members Present : Councillors J. Griffin, T. Neville, J. Sheahan, K. Sheahan.

Officials Present : B. Martin, S.E.E., M. Ryan, S.E.O., T. Enright, D.O.S. Environment & Emergency Services, M. Heenan, C.O.

Cllr. D. Naughton opened the meeting outlining its purpose – this being funding for the proposed new County Council Offices and Library in Rathkeale.

Cllr. J. Griffin requested that a comprehensive register of Co. Council owned assets should be compiled, giving priority to the more valuable assets, but listing all. He strongly suggested that this should be compiled professionally by an appointed asset manager and not by Co. Council staff.

T. Enright, D.O.S., informed the meeting that the closing date for 'Expression of Interests' was 3rd March, 2006 and that the plans are currently ready to go to tender. On receipt of tenders, these will only be valid for 90 days. Therefore, funding must be secured prior to going to tender. As the D.O.E. has not given approval for borrowing, we cannot avail of grant monies and the amount from insurance will be modest, he stated that the Co. Council has been looking at assets that can be easily disposed of. With regard to 30 acres of Co. Council-owned land in Adare, advice has been received to delay sale of this site until such time as there will be a sewerage scheme in place to serve these lands. The cost of the Rathkeale office/library refurbishment is approximately €3.5m plus there is a strong possibility that monies will be needed to develop a new Rathkeale area depot. He stated that while the Co. Council owns small packages of land that can be disposed of, these are of low value while the courthouse in Adare is valued at €5m - €75m. As there is no leasehold on the Adare Courthouse, little usage, other locations in Adare readily available for groups who use it as a meeting venue and little other valuable assets in the Rathkeale area, this makes it an attractive asset for disposal. He informed the meeting that the D.O.E. has requested that Local Authorities compile an Assets Register and that O. Killeen has responsibility for this. The reason for this being that Local Authorities may be in a position to fund projects from own resources.

Cllr. D. Naughton supported the compilation of an Assets Register and that one be put before the next meeting of the Rathkeale area stating that he fears a delay of any sort could jeopardize the timeframe for the project development.

B. Martin, S.E.E., stated that while the Adare Courthouse is a valuable asset, money has had to be spent on it to carry out emergency repairs and Rathkeale Area Office does not have any budget to maintain it. He also shared the concerns of Cllr. Naughton that momentum for the refurbishment project will be lost if funding presents as a stumbling block.

Cllr. K. Sheahan was of the opinion that Adare Courthouse should not be discussed as it sits in another electoral area and requested that only Rathkeale Area assets be discussed. He asked about Co. Council-owned property in Foynes.

Cllr. D. Naughton agreed in principle with the non-crossover of electoral area assets.

Cllr. J. Griffin advised that it would be prudent not to raise expectations for funding from properties with 'impediments' attached. He questioned if there was still a firm of solicitors using the Adare Courthouse and whether they were paying rent or not.

T. Enright, D.O.S., clarified that there was no leasehold on Adare property. With regard to the property in Foynes, he informed the meeting that the Co. Council owned about 8.5 acres at either side of the harbour access road. Some of this has been earmarked for a treatment plant but it would be considered a valuable commercial property (approximately €150,000 - €200,000).

Cllr. K. Sheahan, supported by Cllr. D. Naughton, requested that the management would have due consideration to the Port Company requisites prior to anybody else when disposing of this property.

T. Enright, D.O.S., accepted this, but included that it is desirable that assets would be put up for sale on the open market. He added that consideration must be given to assets that can be easily disposed of – assets that have no ambiguity of ownership, do not require the C.P.O. process and those that will not involve a contest of ownership. He informed the meeting that he will be speaking with the other Co. Councillors regarding the disposal of Adare Courthouse.

Cllr. J. Sheahan asked what timeframe would be involved in relation to the disposal of properties.

T. Enright, D.O.S., replied that the estimated timeframe for completion of the refurbishment project in Rathkeale is 14 months and that it is the Co. Council's desire that properties would be disposed of within this period. He also clarified to those present that, under the terms of the Maastricht Treaty, an embargo has been placed on Local Authority borrowing regardless of pay back ability. He confirmed that the aim is to see that the project be completed as soon as possible. He will seek approval from the next full Council meeting for 'approval in principle' to dispose of assets and to seek the support of the County Councillors. He outlined the timeframe of the development as being that expressions of interest in tendering are already in, tenders will be sought when funding is secured – he hoped that these would be sought within the next month. He continued that the time allowed for receipt of tenders would be 37 days and that tenders would have validity for a period of 90 days thereafter. He added that approval in principle to dispose of assets, not the actual sale of same, would be sufficient to continue on this process.

Cllr. J. Griffin requested that it be put in writing that disposal of assets was necessary to fund the project and that borrowing the funding was not an option. He reiterated that the best possible value should be sought when disposing of any assets.

Cllr. J. Griffin proposed and Cllr. J. Sheahan seconded the motion
"that the Council proceeds with the disposal of assets that are surplus to requirements in the Rathkeale Electoral Area".

T. Enright, D.O.S., sought and received clarification that the property in Foynes is considered surplus to requirements.

That concluded the business of the Meeting.

Signed: _____ Chairman.

Dated this 24th day of APRIL, 2006.

_____ Secretary.