



Minutes of Rathkeale Area Committee Meeting
Held in the Rathkeale House Hotel,
Lower Main Street, Rathkeale
on 16th October, 2006 – 10.30.a.m.

Present In the Chair : Councillor D. Naughton.

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

Officials Present : B. Martin S.E.E., G. Liston, E.E., T. Breen, S.O., S. Hayes, A.O.,
T. Hernon, A/A.O., T Cassidy, Conservation Officer.

Minutes of Area Committee Meeting held on Monday 26th June, 2006 :

The Minutes of the Area Committee Meeting held on Monday, 26th June, 2006, were adopted. Proposed by Councillor J. Sheahan, and seconded by Councillor K. Sheahan.

Disposal of property at Kilquane, Rathkeale – item circulated to Members by Housing Section.

The disposal of the property at Kilquane, Rathkeale was agreed by Members, the disposal being proposed by Councillor K. Sheahan, and seconded by Councillor J. Sheahan.

Update/Progress Report on St. Joseph's Burial Ground Rathkeale – A.O., Water Services.

B. Martin, S.E.E., informed Members Officials were preparing costings/estimates in relation to the suggested burial ground improvements. A revised draft layout plan for the burial ground was also being prepared. It was anticipated that both the costings and revised layout would be available to the elected Members for the November Electoral Area Committee Meeting.

Councillor K. Sheahan questioned if the two headstones erected in recent weeks at St. Joseph's Burial ground had been authorised. Councillor Sheahan also queried the structural safety of the foundations and structures from a Health and Safety viewpoint, and if there was a certification process for monuments in excess of 1.2 metres in height.

B. Martin, S.E.E., stated that all monuments in excess of 1.2 metres erected at St. Joseph's Burial Ground during the past two years had required both Rathkeale Area approval and structural certification of the structure from Consulting Engineers had been sought.

S. Hayes, A.O., confirmed to Members, that Officials had met with the Council's legal people whose advice suggested that the introduction of bye-laws would offer the best long-term option to the Council for the enforcement of policy in relation to burial ground management. The process for the introduction of bye-laws would be lengthy, and it was proposed as an interim measure, to put in place a Manager's Order to regularise the burial ground headstone heights in County Limerick, and also take into account the special needs of St. Joseph's Burial Ground, Rathkeale - the option to erect a Celtic Cross or Monument to a maximum height of 7'.

Councillor D. Naughton queried the standing/status of a Manager's Order, or indeed County bye-laws - when introduced - in relation to burial grounds not in the full ownership of the Council. Councillor Naughton referred to numerous instances in the County where headstones have been erected in burial grounds without reference to, or consent of, either the Council or burial Ground Caretakers.

T. Cassidy, Conservation Officer, informed Members any works undertaken that would interfere with the character or setting of a site would require planning - especially in the case of older burial grounds - he also confirmed there may be implications under the National Monuments Act, and this would be checked.

Councillor J. Sheahan spoke on the necessity/urgency for Members to progress and agree procedure that would permit enforcement of Council Policy in relation to Burial Grounds across the County, and also cater for the specific needs of St. Joseph's Burial Ground, Rathkeale. Councillor Sheahan recommended the St. Joseph's Burial Ground Committee be updated with a progress report on signing of the County Manager's Order.

Councillor K. Sheahan proposed that Officials proceed with due urgency, to put in place the County Manager's Order necessary to regularise Council policy in relation to burial grounds - taking into account the special needs/requirements at St. Joseph's Burial Ground, Rathkeale. Also, that Officials progress with the preparation of the Burial Ground Bye-laws as outlined to Members. Councillor Sheahan recommended that Councillor Griffin be briefed by Area Officials on the proposal, this proposal being subject to the agreement of all Area Committee Members.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor T. Neville, and supported by Councillors D. Naughton and J. Sheahan. Councillor Neville requested that correspondence issue updating the St. Joseph's Burial Ground Committee on progress on signing of the County Manager's Order.

Progress Report on New Rathkeale Council Headquarters and Re-furbishment of Carnegie Library Building at New Line, Rathkeale – S.E.E. Rathkeale.

B. Martin, S.E.E., confirmed the Contractor for the New Rathkeale Area Headquarters and Library was due to come on-site the 16th October. The Contractor appointed was Brian McCarthy & Co., with the construction project to take approximately forty weeks. The move from the Carnegie Library building to the porta-cabin accommodation was completed on the 14th October, with minimum disruption to customer services. Mr. Martin made special mention of the project co-ordinator Mary Ryan, S.E.O., who had recently taken-up a Director of Services appointment with Cork County Council.

Councillor D. Naughton proposed that correspondence issue on behalf of the Rathkeale Area Committee to Ms. Mary Ryan, acknowledging the support and commitment given in bringing the new Area Headquarters and Library project from design through to project funding and commencement, and that best wishes be extended from the Committee in her new appointment. The proposal was seconded by Councillor K. Sheahan, and supported by Councillors Neville and J. Sheahan.

Question submitted by Councillor D. Naughton :

I will ask at the next ordinary Meeting of the Rathkeale Electoral Area Committee that Limerick County Council put in place a fund to supplement the Conservation Grant Scheme, that will provide 100% funding assistance for the preservation of buildings/monuments deemed to be of archaeological and architectural importance.

T. Cassidy, Conservation Officer, circulated a written reply to Members detailing the response to the various elements contained in Councillor Naughton's question.

Councillor K. Sheahan spoke of the various grants paid by the Council, while improving the quality of life for the home-owner, also enhanced the value of properties. He was aware of instances where family

members and relations of deceased home-owners had benefited from the sale of such properties within a short period of time. Councillor Sheahan was concerned that 100% funding for listed/protected buildings under the Conservation Grant Scheme, would again potentially enhance property values, at a cost to the taxpayer, to the benefit of an individual, and suggested that all grant aid awarded be subjected to a “claw-back” of paid grant monies - following the sale of a grant-aided property - based on a sliding scale over a given time frame. Monies recouped under the “claw-back” system would be re-cycled back to the appropriate grant fund. Councillor Sheahan suggested Members be cautious in recommending/ adopting further County-wide schemes utilising resources from the Development Fund, as additional schemes were now reducing funding to other existing community based funding/grant-aid projects.

T. Cassidy, Conservation Officer, undertook to speak with Finance Section staff regarding full Conservation Grant funding for agreed projects and revert back to the elected Members. The suggestion of incorporating a “claw-back” clause-type system would also be discussed.

Councillor J. Sheahan suggested the maximum grant allocation of €25,000 in a given year be re-examined with a view to index linking the grant sum in-line with increases in construction costs.

Councillor D. Naughton proposed a submission be made to the County Secretary from the Rathkeale Electoral Area Committee requesting the Council to put in place the necessary funding to increase the grant aid under the Conservation Grant Scheme from 75% to 100%. The proposal was seconded by Councillor J. Sheahan and supported by Councillors T. Neville, and K. Sheahan.

Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor K. Sheahan :

I will move at the next ordinary Meeting of the Rathkeale Electoral Area that the Council's Housing Section, address the issues arising in relation to the provision of suitable central heating and other related matters, at Friary Court, Askeaton.

Councillor K. Sheahan informed Members of having received numerous complaints from residents at Friary Court, Askeaton, in relation to expensive electricity bills arising from the use of the central heating systems installed in the Friary Court development. Several complaints had also been received regarding the condition of these houses – cracks in the walls both internal and external, poor insulation, and as previously mentioned, the high costs associated with electric heating. He was aware of one tenant whose electricity bill for a two month period was in excess of €200. Councillor Sheahan proposed that the Housing Senior Engineer meet with all the tenants, undertake a full structural assessment, and report back to the Electoral Area Committee with proposals to resolve the complaints from the residents. He was aware of one resident who had requested permission to install oil fired heating at their own expense, this request being refused by Officials on a number of occasions. A suggested compromise solution to the heating issues arising at Friary Court may be the provision of solid fuel stoves in each house, that would provide an “either, or” option to the tenants. The Councillor was anxious that the stove heating option be referred to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee for discussion. Councillor Sheahan recommended the Director of Services, Housing, be advised of the complaints arising from the development.

Councillor T. Neville confirmed his total support of Councillor Sheahan's proposal, on the housing issues arising at the Friary Court development, with the high electricity costs being a serious problem for tenants with limited resources.

Councillor D. Naughton stated that public housing construction standards generally were at an all time high, but in the case of Friary Court, this did not appear to be the case. Councillor Naughton confirmed that every tenant in the development was complaining, and would be supporting Councillor K. Sheahan's motion.

Councillor J. Sheahan queried if there was any liability, at this point in time, on the part of the Friary Court developer, should the houses not be constructed to established standards. Councillor Sheahan also questioned if there was a policy in place preventing a tenant from converting to a lower cost/alternative

heating system in their home, and requested Officials to clarify if such a policy is in place at the November Electoral Area Committee Meeting.

T. Herson, A/A.O., informed Members the reasoning behind the provision of electrical heating in the smaller type houses was to facilitate the elderly. Electric heating avoided the large “one-off” bills associated with oil systems, and the drawing of fuel and cleaning associated with solid fuel systems.

Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor D. Naughton :

I will move at the next ordinary Meeting of the Rathkeale Electoral Area that Ballysteen, it's adjacent townlands, and the Rathkeale Electoral Area be included as an area of infrastructural weakness in the County Development Plan.

Councillor D. Naughton informed Members he had met with the Director of Services, Planning, and Senior Planner on this Motion, who confirmed the Iveruss and Askeaton East areas were experiencing population decline, and were areas of infrastructural weakness. Councillor Naughton was anxious that the entire Rathkeale Area would be included as an area of infrastructural weakness as population increase in the Electoral area had overall been minimal.

Councillor K. Sheahan confirmed his support for the Motion stating that the marginal population increases in the Electoral Area related to recent years, and that figures produced did not reflect the real population decline of the area over the previous sixty to seventy years. Councillor Sheahan stressed the importance for the Area Committee Members to speak with one voice, and take a united stance for the Electoral Area.

Councillor T. Neville stated his support for the Rathkeale Area concept as an Area of Infrastructural weakness, and that overall population increase figures were based on recent census records, not on a long-term assessment as described by Councillor Sheahan.

Councillor J. Sheahan spoke on rural depopulation to the west of the Electoral Area, and his support of the Motion.

Members were agreed that a Notice of Motion, signed by all Rathkeale Electoral Area Committee Members would be submitted for the November Meeting of full Council, and read as follows :-

We will move at the next Meeting of Limerick County Council, “that the County Development Plan be amended to include the entire Rathkeale Electoral Area, as an area of infrastructural weakness”.

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor K. Sheahan, and seconded by Councillor T. Neville.

A.O.B.

Councillor K. Sheahan proposed that a submission be made to the County Secretary, from the Members of the Rathkeale Electoral Area Committee for Section 30, paragraph 2, of the Council's Standing Orders for Meetings be amended as follows :-

“A Notice of Motion or a Question submitted from an Electoral Area Committee, supported and signed by ALL the Electoral Area Councillors, shall not interfere with an individual Councillors entitlement to submit one Notice of Motion and three Questions at each Council Meeting.”

The proposal was seconded by Councillor D. Naughton, and supported by Councillors T. Neville, and J. Sheahan.

B. Martin, S.E.E., informed Members the restoration of the stone sets on Kiltetry Pier had commenced.

Election of Chairperson to the Gortadroma Monitoring Group :-

Councillor D. Naughton was proposed by Councillor K. Sheahan, and seconded by Councillor T. Neville.

Members agreed the next Rathkeale Electoral Area Committee Meeting will be held in Rathkeale on Monday 6th November, 2006 at 11.00.a.m. Members also agreed to receive a deputation from the Kilcolman Burial Ground Committee to a Special Area Committee Meeting at 10.30.a.m.

That concluded the business of the Meeting.

Signed: _____Chairman.

Dated this 6th day of NOVEMBER, 2006.

Secretary.