Minutes - April 2023

Ennis Municipal District meeting

10:45a.m. on Tuesday 4th April 2023

Council Chamber and on-line

Councillors: C. Colleran-Molloy, P. Murphy, T. O'Callaghan, M. Howard, J. Flynn, A. Norton,

P. Daly.

Officials: Carmel Kirby, Director of Service, Leonore O'Neill, Senior Executive Officer,

Patrick Tiernan, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Donnagh Murphy, Executive Engineer, Niamh O'Connor, Administrative Officer & Meetings Administrator,

Lily McInerney, Staff Officer (minutes).

Apologies: None.

Chairperson Cllr. Colleran-Molloy opened the meeting.

Item No. 1. Minutes of the March 2023 Meeting of Municipal District of Ennis held on 7th March 2023, and Minutes of Special Meeting of Ennis Municipal District held on 21st March 2023.

This item was proposed by Cllr. M. Howard, seconded by Cllr. T. O'Callaghan and agreed by all Members.

Item No. 2. Matters Arising

None

Item No. 3. GMA Allocations

Project	Amount
Ennis CE Scheme	€1,198.75
22 nd Clare Battalion	€500.00
Ennis 2040 - Transition Year - Sustainability Project Transportation costs for the winning team's trip to Dáil Éireann.	€1,600.00
Rás Tailteann	€5,000

This item was proposed by Cllr. M. Howard, seconded by Cllr. P. Murphy and agreed by all Members.

Item No. 4. Notices of Motion

No. 1 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. C. Colleran-Molloy

I request an outline of the evolution of Ennis 2040 to date, and clarification on the status of the Ennis 2040. How is the delivery of Ennis 2040 integrated into the overall vision for Ennis?

Carmel Kirby, Director of Services, responded as follows:

The Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy was completed in 2021 by international experts on behalf of Clare County Council after two years of study, analysis and extensive stakeholder consultations with local representatives, local communities, and businesses. Ennis 2040 was endorsed by Ennis Municipal District and Clare County Councillors in 2021 and recently the transformational sites were included in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 which was adopted unanimously by Clare County Council. Abbey Street and Francis Street are two of these opportunity sites.

The vision of the plan is that 'Ennis will strengthen its role as a key regional economic driver and major tourist destination in the Mid-West through the expansion and diversification of its economic offering and by capitalising on the strength of its significant architectural, cultural and historic heritage. It's growth will be based on the "10 Minute Town" concept with the Town Centre at the heart of this highly accessible and revitalised Ennis - the focus for retail, residential, commercial, educational, leisure and cultural growth. Ennis will support, enhance and utilise its existing natural assets to lead the way as "Ireland's First Climate Adaptive Town" and to create an accessible place of quality.'

The Ennis 2040 DAC was constituted to implement the Ennis 2040 plan on behalf of Clare County Council. The DAC is 100% owned by Clare County Council and is established on a 'not for profit' basis. It is fully in public ownership.

Clare County Council aims to continue to make Ennis, in collaboration with our stakeholders, a quality place for people to live, work and visit. It is planned to transform Ennis into a town of the future through an integrated suite of projects, infrastructure, and cultural amenities. This requires extensive investment and planning and a vision of what our future looks like. The plans and strategies have been completed by Clare County Council and now we are in the delivery phase of a multitude of integrated projects and infrastructure. Examples include the new library, housing projects, Ennis Public Realm projects, active travel, and Ennis 2040.

This item was seconded by Cllr. M. Howard.

Cllr Colleran-Molloy then welcomed the group of Ennis Retailers who were in the public gallery. The Mayor commended the *Ennis2040 DAC* for generating a plan, to guarantee the viability of Ennis for future generations. She stated that this plan had been in gestation since 2019 and was unanimously adopted by Ennis Members and subsequently embedded into the County Development Plan 2023-2029. She added that *Ennis 2040* represented the only major investment for Ennis' future and that it was crucial to continue to support its programme rollout.

Cllr Flynn outlined that the concepts and overall vision in the Ennis2040 plan was adopted but that it was important that the detail on each item is examined. He added that he accepted and supported the jobs at Ballymaley. He further added that the Francis Street site was not in the original document. He outlined that although he was against building on Abbey Street Car Park, overall he fully supported Ennis2040.

Cllr Norton stated that she supported the Ennis2040 plan, making reference to expert research and its deliverables in meeting the future needs of younger generations. Cllr Howard also supported the plan reminding the meeting that Ennis Members have a remit as custodians of the municipality to plan for its future, adding that the calibre of expertise involved in delivering Ennis 2040 was a key ingredient in instilling confidence in its success.

Cllr O'Callaghan outlined his support for Ennis2040 but outlined that the concerns raised are warranted. He outlined that changes must benefit retailers as well as everyone else.

Cllr Howard added that the Ennis MD Councillors are custodians of Ennis whose remit it is to look to the future. Cllr Howard stated that the Ennis2040 vision is brave and that her gut feeling is that Ennis2040 is a good thing and that she is deeply invested in it.

Cllr Murphy supported the plan and highlighted the final paragraph of the response to the Notice of Motion as being central to his belief that these plans serve the best possible outcome for Ennis's future generations.

It was agreed that Notices 2, 3 and 4 would be dealt with as one.

No. 2 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. T. O'Callaghan

Following contact from ratepayers on Abbey Street Cllr Tom O'Callaghan, Cllr Johnny Flynn and Cllr Daly ask that Ennis Municipal District request Ennis 2040 to rethink its plans to build a multistorey mixed-use building on the Abbey Street public car park. In the current period of cost-of-living crisis, the proposed long term loss of a large number of adjacent scarce public car-parking and potentially up to two year business disruption due to building construction works in the car park the ratepayers fear if the proposal goes ahead would result in further retail and hospitality business closures, job losses and increased vacancy on Abbey Street and surrounding area.

Carmel Kirby, Director of Services, responded as follows:

The Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy was completed in 2021 by international experts on behalf Clare County Council after two years of study, analysis and extensive stakeholder consultations with local representatives, local communities, and businesses. Ennis 2040 was endorsed by Ennis Municipal District and Clare County Councillors in 2021 and recently the transformational sites were included in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 which was adopted unanimously by Clare County Council. Abbey Street and Francis Street are two of these opportunity sites.

The Ennis 2040 strategy envisages that the population of Ennis will grow on average by 1.6% per annum to approximately **37,000 people** by 2040. Furthermore, the plan proposes the prioritisation of sustainable economic activities by focusing on existing assets and creating a competitive offer unique to Ennis that will deliver an additional 5,000 jobs by 2040.

One of the opportunity sites within both the adopted County Development Plan, and the Ennis 2040 plan is Abbey Street Car Park. Whilst I appreciate the concerns of the business community in the area, the proposed commercial development on Abbey St is anticipated to increase footfall in the town by 20,000 per week, create over 100 direct jobs, and will support multiples of indirect jobs in the locality. Although the development of the site will result in the decommissioning of 126 car parking spaces at that location, between planning granted in 2022 and planning currently being sought, there will be 499 additional car parking spaces provided (GAA Site in Cusack Park, Ennis Boys National School Site, Waterpark Campus and Francis Street site). The public bus service will also be in place in 2025 which will free up a considerable number of car parking spaces.

Cllr. O'Callaghan, in response, stated clearly that he supported Ennis2040 but is against the building on Abbey Street carpark. He asked that 'the box' be moved to the other side of the river.

The Director of Service outlined that Ennis is designated a 'key town' for investment in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, the Ennis2040 strategy has been used as part of Ennis' strategy when securing funding from central government, and each Ennis2040 project will have a public consultation process. She reiterated the Council is not taking houses to create carparks.

Cllr Flynn in acknowledging the response made reference to relevant data gathered from a number of sources 1) 77% of shoppers travel to Ennis by car (Retail Excellence Ireland) 2) public carparking from development contributions has not been delivered 3) past surveys had identified a deficiency of 2,000 car parking spaces for the town 4) a 2018 'Town Centre Health Check' highlighted customers concerns regarding availability and cost of parking 5) the 'Ten-Minute Town' document highlighted that more short-term parking is essential. He stated that the acquired Francis Street site should be used to deliver on the housing deficit rather than a temporary car park. Cllr. Flynn advised that he could not support building on Abbey Street car park or Harveys Quay which would involve the relocation of a taxi rank. He highlighted that the availability and cost of car parking in Ennis are his top issues.

Cllr. Daly in acknowledging the response reiterated that Ennis' economic success is dependent on the availability of car parking. He stated that he could not support the development of a building on Abbey Street car park and requested that the Ennis2040 plan be revisited to address this.

Carmel Kirby, Director of Service commended all stakeholders who had worked hard over the years in establishing Ennis as a 'key town' for investment under the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. She emphasised that alignment with Government policy for various programmes had achieved huge benefits for Ennis thus far, €15m worth of public realm works, an upcoming Town Bus Service, €4.5m in Active Travel funding. She added that *Ennis2040* has been key to leveraging investment from central government and the absence of this would likely see Ennis fall prey to the type of stagnation and decline being experienced by many similar towns. In addition, she advised that investors are attracted to locations with a good track record of delivery and a 'can do' attitude.

She acknowledged the concerns of businesses particularly challenges relating to rising energy costs, rising costs of materials and the cost of living generally. She committed to ensuring effective communication and vouched for *Ennis 2040* being the vehicle through which mutual economic, social and physical benefits are achievable. The project in Abbey Street aims to create 100 direct jobs in retail and office accommodation and 200 jobs during the construction phase.

The Director of Service provided a brief analysis of car parking changes for Ennis.

- A displacement of 126 car parking spaces arising from the Abbey Street development, 306 additional parking spaces will be provided between the Boys NS and the GAA, plus an additional 193 spaces on council owned land, giving an overall addition of 499 new spaces for the town.
- Of the 126 car parking spaces on Abbey Street, 77 are business permits, 7 residential leaving 42 customer parking spaces mainly used by staff working in the town. However, she advised that increasing the footfall in the town centre by 20,000 people per week will have a far more positive impact than retaining the 42 customer parking spaces in Abbey Street.

She emphasised that it was essential not to repeat mistakes made by other towns and cities with outof-town developments having a detrimental impact on town and city centres. She advised that Ennis has 1 parking space for every 13 people, it equals Kilkenny, fares better than Waterford which has 1 space for every 29 people, and Navan that has 1 parking space for every 24 people.

Cllr Colleran Molloy outlined that there was a need to specifically address the misrepresentation of the deficit of car parking spaces. She outlined her objection to the term 'box' when referencing the Abbey Street development. She affirmed that any potential development would have an associated public consultation.

Cllr O'Callaghan and Cllr Flynn clarified that the term 'box' was not derogatory as the illustrations in the Ennis 2040 plan only showed a coloured box. Cllr Flynn also stated his disagreement with the carparking figures quoted by the Director.

Later in the meeting, following Notice of Motion No. 5, Leonore O'Neill requested the Mayor to revert back to Notice of Motions No. 2, 3 and 4 to have them formally seconded and a vote called. Leonore O'Neill clarified that as the Notice of Motion requested action to be taken by Ennis Municipal District clarity was needed. The Mayor then called for Notices 2, 3 and 4 to be seconded.

This item was seconded by Cllr. J. Flynn.

A vote was called and members voted as follows, three members were in favour (Clir. Tom O'Callaghan, Clir. Pat Daly, Clir. Johnny Flynn) four against (Clir. Clare Colleran-Molly, Clir. Mary Howard, Clir. Paul Murphy, Clir. Ann Norton), hence motions 2, 3 and 4 were not carried.

No. 3 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. J Flynn

Abbey Street Carpark.

Following contact from ratepayers on Abbey Street Cllr Johnny Flynn, Cllr Tom O Callaghan and Cllr Pat Daly ask that Ennis Municipal District request Ennis 2040 to rethink its plans to build a multistorey mixed use building on the Abbey Street public car park. In the current period of cost of living crisis, the proposed long term loss of a large number of adjacent scarce public car-parking and potentially up to two year business disruption due to building construction works in the car park the ratepayers fear if the proposal goes ahead would result in further retail and hospitality business closures, job losses and increased vacancy on Abbey Street and surrounding area.

Carmel Kirby, Director of Services, responded as follows:

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locality. Although the development of the site will result in the decommissioning of 126 car parking spaces at that location, between planning granted in 2022 and planning currently being sought, there will be 499 additional car parking spaces provided (GAA Site in Cusack Park, Ennis Boys National School Site, Waterpark Campus and Francis Street site). The public bus service will also be in place in 2025 which will free up a considerable number of car parking spaces.

This item was seconded by Cllr. Tom O'Callaghan.

See Notice of Motion No. 2.

No. 4 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. P. Daly

Abbey Street Carpark.

Following contact from ratepayers on Abbey Street Cllr Johnny Flynn, Cllr Tom O Callaghan and Cllr Pat Daly ask that Ennis Municipal District request Ennis 2040 to rethink its plans to build a multistorey mixed use building on the Abbey Street public car park. In the current period of cost of living crisis, the proposed long term loss of a large number of adjacent scarce public car-parking and potentially up to two year business disruption due to building construction works in the car park the ratepayers fear if the proposal goes ahead would result in further retail and hospitality business closures, job losses and increased vacancy on Abbey Street and surrounding area.

Carmel Kirby, Director of Services, responded as follows:

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One of the opportunity sites within both the adopted County Development Plan, and the Ennis 2040 plan is Abbey Street Car Park. Whilst I appreciate the concerns of the business community in the area, the proposed commercial development on Abbey St is anticipated to increase footfall in the town by 20,000 per week, create over 100 direct jobs, and will support multiples of indirect jobs in the locality. Although the development of the site will result in the decommissioning of 126 car parking spaces at that location, between planning granted in 2022 and planning currently being sought, there will be 499 additional car parking spaces provided (GAA Site in Cusack Park, Ennis Boys National School Site, Waterpark Campus and Francis Street site). The public bus service will also be in place in 2025 which will free up a considerable number of car parking spaces.

This item was seconded by Cllr. J. Flynn.

See Notice of Motion No. 2.

No. 5 Notice of Motion submitted by Clir. P Murphy

I request that grass cutting of council managed public green areas commences as soon as possible. Also, that additional financial resources are requested in future Budgetary processes, both at

Municipal and County level, so that the required support can be given to our outdoor crews, contractors and community groups as they all endeavour to promote Biodiversity and engage with the All Ireland Pollinator Plan.

Leonore O'Neill, Senior Executive Officer responded as follows:

The grass cutting in the Ennis Municipal District area is due to commence on Monday April 3rd. Ennis MD seek will seek an allocation of additional financial resources for grass cutting as part of the Council's Budgetary process. The adoption of the annual budget is a reserved function of the Council.

This item was seconded by Cllr. J. Flynn and agreed by all Members.

Cllr Murphy welcomed the response, highlighting that these green spaces are highly valued by the younger generation for sports and other activities. He added that the correct balance needs to be achieved between meeting these needs and the biodiversity restrictions. Cllrs Flynn, Howard and O'Callaghan also supported this Motion.

No. 6 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. M. Howard

That Ennis Municipal District hosts a Mayor's Civic Reception, on Monday April 24th 2023, to honour those attending school in the municipal district, who have won an All-Ireland medal for a school activity (sport, music, drama, other) in the last 12 months.

No response required

This item was seconded by Cllr. Colleran-Molloy and agreed by all Members.

It was agreed to deal with Notice of Motion No.6, 7 and 8 as one.

Cllr Howard welcomed the broad baseline of those to be honoured. Cllr Norton highlighted the importance of acknowledging the successes and endeavours of young people, particularly those involved in sports at a young age. Cllr Colleran-Molloy reminded the meeting that inviting young people into the Council Chamber can have the benefit of instilling a sense of civic duty and an interest in entering public life.

No. 7 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. A. Norton

That Ennis Municipal District hosts a Mayor's Civic Reception, on Monday April 24th 2023, to honour those attending school in the municipal district, who have won an All-Ireland medal for a school activity (sport, music, drama, other) in the last 12 months.

No response required

This item was seconded by Cllr. M. Howard and agreed by all Members.

See Notice of Motion No. 6.

No. 8 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. C. Colleran-Molloy

That Ennis Municipal District hosts a Mayor's Civic Reception, on Monday April 24th 2023, to honour those attending school in the municipal district, who have won an All-Ireland medal for a school activity (sport, music, drama, other) in the last 12 months.

No response required

This item was seconded by Cllr. A. Norton and agreed by all Members.

See Notice of Motion No. 6.

No. 9 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. T O'Callaghan

Gort Road opposite Lynch's Centra

Trees need cutting back urgently before growth otherwise Street lights will be overshadowed.

Tommy Scott, Senior Executive Technician, responded as follows:

The trees at this location will be inspected and the work scheduled.

This item was seconded by Cllr. M. Howard and agreed by all Members.

Cllr O'Callaghan acknowledged the response. Paddy Tiernan, A/Senior Executive Engineer, clarified that where there are Health & Safety concerns, legislation allows for works to carried out within the wildlife nesting season.

No. 10 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. J. Flynn

Traffic safety at Doora Village and School

The Chief Executive's report of July 10th 2022 agreed with my submission (\$2/855) to the Draft County Development Plan (CDP) 2023-2029 proposing the designation of Doora as a "small village". My subsequent submission (\$3/126) to the next phase of that process requested that specific road safety objectives , namely provision of traffic calming/footpaths/bus stop/additional public lighting, be written into the specific text for Doora village within the CDP. In the subsequent Chief Executive's report of 30th January 2023 the response stated these should be dealt with separately and went on to state "However , I concur that there are several issues that need investigation. I will engage with the Ennis Municipal District with regard to following up on the points raised in this submission ". I made a written submission 26 January 2023 to the proposed 2023 Road works Programme in which I included a request for "Provision footpath , traffic calming & public lighting for Doora Village & school" .

I now ask Ennis Municipal District for an update on progress on these traffic safety works for Doora Village and School.

Patrick Tiernan, A/Senior Executive Engineer, responded as follows:

Members will be aware that Doora is proposed to be upgraded from "cluster" to "small village" status under the County Development Plan 2023-2029 which is currently in draft format. In anticipation of the proposals being finally adopted, Ennis MD have already commenced advanced works to assist with creating an overall public realm plan for the area. A topographical survey of the village has commenced and this will help inform plans for future footpaths, street lighting etc. A total of €10,000 has been allocated to Doora under the Schedule of Municipal Works 2023 − this is cover costs of the survey and also some minor drainage works. Measures to assist with speed reductions including centreline road markings and the repair of existing variable message boards are also planned. I also wish to note Doora was included as a standalone project within our submission to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for grant funding under Active Travel for 2023. Unfortunately this application was unsuccessful but we hope the upgraded status from cluster to village will strengthen the case for funding in 2024.

Doora National school is located approximately 1400m from Doora village on the L4112-8 which is a narrow local road. Ennis MD carried out a traffic speed survey on this road in October 2022 and no significant cases of speeding were observed. The installation of a footpath from the village to the school is a very substantial project and would involve several land acquisitions. It is unlikely this project would be deemed suitable by the NTA for an Active Travel project due to the cost-benefit ratio. During previous correspondence with the school principal we advised such a scheme may be suitable for the Safe Routes to School Programme and suggested an application be made for same. We also note comments from our Rural & Community Development Officer regarding other potential funding sources.

Niamh Wiley, Rural & Community Development Officer, responded as follows:

The Rural & Community Development Officer attended on-site meetings between Ennis MD, Doora National School and Doora Community Development Group. This discussion also focused on the possibility of developing a community-led recreation looped trail, which may have the potential of linkage between Doora National School and Doora Village. The Rural and Community Development Officer remains available to support the group in terms of providing funding guidance, should they decide to move forward with this project. The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) may be one possible funding stream to explore. This funding stream supports the provision of outdoor infrastructure on standalone small, medium and large-scale walking or cycling trail projects, that are in line with the objectives and focus of the scheme, which is a national competitive process under the Department of Rural & Community Development (DRCD).

This item was seconded by Cllr. A. Norton and agreed by all Members.

Cllr Flynn thanked Paddy Tiernan and Niamh Wiley for the responses and stressed that he hoped that a) current works are only preliminary to the traffic calming works that are appropriate to this residential zone b) ORIS funding be sought in the absence of Active Travel funding for this scheme. Cllr Norton stressed that these measures will become more urgent as the school expands. Cllrs Howard, O'Callaghan and Colleran-Molloy also voiced support for this Motion.

No. 11 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. P. Murphy

I am requesting that appropriate traffic calming is considered on the approach to the mini roundabout at Church Drive/Creggaunahilla, Clarecastle.

Patrick Tiernan, A/Senior Executive Engineer, responded as follows:

Ennis MD together with our colleagues in the Active Travel will review the requirement for traffic calming at this roundabout and will incorporate any measures deemed appropriate into the wider scheme that is currently being considered for Old Road/Church Drive.

This item was seconded by Cllr T. O'Callaghan and agreed by all Members.

Cllr P. Murphy welcomed the details of the response.

No. 12 Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr. M. Howard

Signage for parking is proving a huge problem for visitors to Ennis who rely on "google maps", in light of the current pedestrianisation and the upcoming summer season can signs be placed throughout the town to direct visitors to car parking.

Leonore O'Neill, Senior Executive Officer, responded as follows:

In 2021 a total of 34 additional directional street signs were erected on the outer ring road at the relevant junctions directing visitors both to the town and to car parking at a cost in excess of €12,000. Ennis Municipal District have been making ongoing attempts to engage with google maps regarding the current pedestrianisation arrangements in place within the town centre.

This item was seconded by ClIr. T. O'Callaghan and agreed by all Members.

Cllr Howard stressed that hotels encounter regular problems giving clear directions to their customers and it is incumbent on Members that visitors to Ennis are facilitated in this regard. Cllrs O'Callaghan and Flynn also supported this Motion.

Item No. 5. Correspondence

None.

Item No. 6. Any Other Business

- (i) Cllr Howard issued a reminder on her request for replacement of the bin in Monastery Park. Paddy Tiernan, A/Senior Executive Engineer confirmed that a delay had occurred in securing new bins but that this would be rectified within a week.
- (ii) Cllr Howard commended Brendan Keogh, Gardening Section who is due to retire shortly. She praised his vision and competence as well as his approachable nature.

The Meeting ended at 12:45 p.m.

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Mayor of Ennis

Signed.

Meetings Administrato

Date: