

Cork City and County Archives

Fonds Level Description

Identity Statement Area

Reference Code: IE CCCA/PWTC
Title: Passage West Town Commisioners
Dates: (1910), 1920 – 1980s
Level of description: Fonds
Extent: 53 items (c. 9 boxes)

Context

Creator

Passage West Town Commissioners (formerly Passage West Urban District Council)

Archival History

The collection was deposited in Cork Archives Institute in 2001 by the Town Clerk.

Administrative History

Passage West Town Commsioners (today named Passage West Town Council) was established in 1920. Efforts had been made prior to 1920 to establish Town Commissioners under the Towns Improvement Act (Ireland) 1854. This Act enabled settlements of a reasonable size to establish Town Commissioners with responsibility for lighting, paving, drainage and water supply. Sanitary and water facilities in the town were inadequate and there was no public lighting.

In 1898, the Local Government (Ireland) Act established a publicly-elected system of local government in Ireland, including county councils, urban district councils and rural district councils. After a major push on the part of local electors, the adoption of the Towns Improvement Act for Passage West and Monkstown was finally approved in March 1920. The Town Council was to comprise 15 elected members. Five were to be elected for South Passage/Monkstown and the remaining ten for Passage town/North Passage. The election was held on 14 July 1920. The first meeting of the new Passage West Town Commissioners was held on 19 July 1920 and Mr. Henry O'Mahony was elected to the Chair.

Under the Local Government (Ireland) Act, urban districts could be created from the larger of the town commissioner towns. This gave increased responsibilities to the elected council. In January 1922, the Passage West Town Commissioners were granted Free State government approval for urbanisation and they became the Passage West Urban District Council in 1924.

The new Urban District Council set about upgrading and modernising housing and services in the town. By 1930, major investment had been made in local water supply. Landlords were asked to install toilets in all houses and several sewers were modernised. In 1932, public lighting was installed in both Passage West and Monkstown.

Passage West suffered economically from the loss of the local dockyard and the UDC suffered financial and other problems. In 1938, the Minister for Local Government and Public Health ordered the dissolution of the UDC and on 10 March the Council's duties were temporarily transferred to the secretary of the South Cork Board of Health. The deurbanisation of Passage West/Monkstown took place in 1942 when the Council became once more the Passage West Town Commissioners, and all road, sanitation and lighting responsibilities were transferred to Cork County Council.

The Local Government Act 2001 created the single title of Town Council for Boroughs, Urban District Councils and Town Commissioners. Thus in 2001, the Passage West Town Commissioners became known as the Passage West Town Council.

Content and Structure

Scope and Content

Minute books 1920-1989, finance committee minute book 1922-1950, register of managers orders 1954-86, register of loans 1924-41, register of mortgages 1924-41, accounts of expenditure 1966- 1984, Artizans dwellings general rental 1953-63, 1981-83, abstract of accounts 1947-1985, correspondence, files, maps plans and drawings.

The first set of minutes start in July 1920, and covering the turbulent period of the War of Independence and the Civil War, and the transfer of power to the Free State. On 7 September 1920 the U.D.C. responded to the hunger strike campaign of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence McSwiney, in Brixton Gaol, London, with the resolution, "... that we tender to the Lord Mayoress an expression of our deep and respectful admiration of the noble and heroic battle which the Lord Mayor [is]... fighting on behalf of Ireland." An historically significant entry from this period is that of 25 November 1921, when we find a 'cordial welcome' extended to the Chairman Mr. H.J. O'Mahony and to Mr. Spillane 'the former on his escape, and the latter on his release from internment' The Commissioners then unanimously resolved to pledge full allegiance to Dáil Éireann, "the Supreme Lawful Authority in Ireland, and direct that in future all minutes etc. of the Commissioners be sent to the Local Government Department of Dáil Éireann".

On 2 January 1923, during the Civil War, a resolution from Cork Rural District Council was adopted by the Commissioners 'that we take steps by every means in our power to stop this unnatural warfare, which is degrading the name of Ireland...".

For the Emergency period 1940-1945 there are a few notable entries in the minutes. At a meeting in September 1940, it was suggested to convert the disused Passage and Blackrock Railway tunnel at Glenbrook for use as an air raid shelter. (This was referred to the County Council.) In May 1942 the Local Security Force received fire brigade equipment, perhaps reflecting concerns that Cork Harbour might be subject to an aerial bombardment or become a target in an invasion by sea. The town occupies a strategic point in Cork Harbour, with downstream port facilities and road access to Cork City. The key position of the town had been illustrated dramatically during the Civil War when the National Army came ashore at Passage West, en route to attack Irregular forces at their strongholds in the city.

The records document some of the social and economic problems common in the early-mid 20th century, including entries recording the concern of officials and elected representatives and others regarding the living conditions of some of the poorer inhabitants of the area, variously overcrowding, unemployment, disease, inadequate sanitation or water supplies.

The records document investment in local services and infrastructure which was secured with loans and other monies, for projects such as the development of water supplies, labourers' cottages, sewers, urban housing schemes, and the technical school.

In more recent decades the matters which occupied the attention of the town's representatives included involvement with Cork County Council and with Cork Corporation (now Cork City Council) on matters affecting the locality, the role of the area in county or city development plans, the siting of the fertiliser plant across the river Lee, the employment situation in the area, the development of educational facilities, industrial development, the need for investment in amenities and leisure facilities, tidy towns competitions, management of property, efforts to improve the upkeep of roads and footpaths, buildings and the general environment.

System of Arrangement

- A: Minute Books
- B: Registers
- C: Accounts and Housing Rentals
- D: Files and Folders
- E: Maps, Plans and Drawings

Allied Materials

CCCA:

Various records from other Town Councils in Cork eg Mallow, Cobh, Bandon, Clonakilty, Youghal.

Conditions of Access and Use

Access: Open by appointment to those holding a current readers ticket.

Language: English

Finding Aid: List

Archivists Note

Brian McGee, Archivist, Cork City & County Archives
April 2010