

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in the Civic Offices,
Blessington on 26th of February 2018, at 10.30 a.m.**

Present: Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake
Councillor Edward Timmins
Councillor Jim Ruttle
Councillor Gerry O'Neill
Councillor Tommy Cullen
Councillor Pat Doran

In Attendance: Mr. Michael Flynn, Senior Engineer, Roads
Mr. Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer
Mr. Declan Geraghty, District Engineer
Ms. Dionne Dixon, District Administrator
Ms. Lisa Moore, Clerical Officer

Apologies: Mr. Sean Quirke, District Manager

Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake opened the meeting and welcomed Michael Flynn, Senior Engineer, Roads Section who was standing in on behalf of Sean Quirke, District Manager.

1. To confirm the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 22nd of January 2018

Cllr. Pat Doran proposed the confirmation of the Ordinary meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 22nd January 2018, seconded by Cllr. Tommy Cullen.

2. Matters arising.

The Cathaoirleach acknowledged the good work done by Declan Geraghty, District Engineer on the cleanup operation undertaken to clear up the mud and dirt covering the white road markings of the N81 previously complained of by members of the public.

3. To receive a presentation from Breege Kilkenny, Senior Engineer, Housing Section re Housing Supply/Schemes.

Breege Kilkenny, Senior Engineer informed the members that following on from the Housing Summit held in January, Frank Curran, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council directed that the Senior Members of the Housing Section review all available lands in County Wicklow with a view to identifying potential areas for development of Housing Units with emphasis placed on larger sites.

Sites identified within Baltinglass Municipal District were as follows:-

- Lugduff (School Road) and Kilcommon View in Tinahely. Breege explained that is a need to accelerate the housing supply programme and as infills do take longer to develop and build there is a drive to give priority to larger sites that can produce more units.
- Whitehall, Baltinglass. This is a priority site in Baltinglass and the Baltinglass Local Area Plan will include the road as part of the development so that it doesn't contravene the County Development Plan.
- Carnew would possibly produce 30 units for private and affordable use subject to Part 8 Planning approval and there will be two or three units developed for the elderly.
- Blessington, the Burgage site area presents a challenge because of the Irish Water's sewerage problem which has delayed the development of this site which has a potential to produce 30 to 50 housing units. Breege informed the meeting that the Department has put together a Delivery Team tasked with the job of resolving this issue with Irish Water as soon as possible so development can commence.
- Shillelagh – whilst housing need is relatively low there is a site near Parkbridge Road that could yield housing units.
- Dunlavin, Breege informed the meeting that the Department is very keen to keep development as close to the centre of Dunlavin as possible. The site identified is close to Sparrow Road, and 7 housing units are possible. There is a possibility that these units would be offered to Approved Housing Bodies. There is an Irish Water issue in Dunlavin (water) and again this will be discussed with the Department's Development Team with a view to progressing matters to resolution with Irish Water.

Breege also outlined the other areas that the Housing Section are investigating to produce housing units including acquisitions of private properties, however there is a competition with other buyers trying to obtain private dwellings. The Housing Section are also looking for Turn Key Developer units from Developers, which is not the same as Part V. Expressions of Interest were advertised in December but there was not much interest but the Housing Section remain open to Developers to approach them once they have obtained their Planning Permission and have units in an area identified as having a housing need.

Derelict Sites are being actively looked at by the Housing Section although only 7 units throughout the entire County have been identified to date.

Breege then outlined some of the challenges faced by the Housing Section. Unfortunately there are a low number of professional resources available to County Wicklow compared to other Local Authorities, in Mayo there have seven architects, Sligo has five architects. County Wicklow has one architect and a

target of 1300 housing units to meet. There is a recruitment plan in place to increase the number of Architects and a Clerk of Works being recruited before June 2018 is planned.

The Glending Estate refurbishment (Stage 3) has been slowed down as some residents are refusing to move which is slowing down the process and Breege sought any assistance that the Councillor's could offer to resolve the hold up in Glending Estate.

Cllr Tommy Cullen thanked Breege Kilkenny for her presentation which had some good news and not so good news. He was pleased to see a more positive attitude from the Department in relation to Council led schemes. However he is disappointed at the lack of progress in Blessington as himself and Cllr Pat Doran had warned about the water quality issue in Burgage a number of years ago and he suggested that it be put on the Agenda for the next County Council meeting to put pressure on Irish Water. He is disappointed at the lack of appetite on the part of the Department to support one off houses which would ease the pressure of people and he suggested that the Council make available a special loan facility with the site being used as a deposit to facilitate people who have funding, a site and planning permission in place. Cllr Cullen also suggested that there be "step down" houses in Local Authority housing estates so that people can downsize and hand back larger houses to the Local Authority to meet housing demand by larger families, a common practice in England and Wales.

Cllr. Gerry O'Neill thanked Breege for her report and expressed disappointment at the hold up in Blessington with regard to Irish Water, water quality issue and urged all the Councillors to attend meetings with Irish Water as there were only two Councillors who attended the last two meetings with Irish Water and more pressure needs to be put onto Irish Water by all six Councillors of the Baltinglass Municipal District. Cllr. O'Neill also noted that in the Dunlavin area people were denied planning permission but they would be prepared to buy sites in the area and he urged the Council to open up the Housing Policy to look to sell sites to qualified individuals. Breege responded by explaining that selling sites privately would only yield 2 or 3 units but all options would be explored.

Cllr. Pat Doran thanked Breege for her presentation but expressed his disappointment over the allocation of houses being done without prior Garda vetting and this had led to a big rise in anti social behaviour in certain areas. Breege informed Cllr Doran that she would appraise the Director of Housing of this issue.

Breege was then asked to outline the timeframe for delivery of the housing units and she explained that the programme is a 4 stage process in total and can take 59 weeks. All pre-stage works (stage 1) would be completed by this summer and the commencement of the programme was estimated to be June 2019 and for the programme to be completed by end of 2021. The Councillors all expressed dismay at the delay but Breege explained that this is due to the lengthy statutory and procurement processes which have to be open, transparent and are also governed by European law.

Breege looked for full support from the Councillors particularly for the Part 8 Planning Process and she received all of the Councillors full support which was welcomed by Breege.

Cllr. Jim Ruttle thanked Breege for her report and complimented her on bringing the maps. He acknowledged the water and waste water infrastructure problem in both Blessington and Dunlavin and hoped that progress would be made with Irish Water to resolve this issue. He also acknowledged the capacity problem particularly in Blessington due to its attractive nature. He asked Breege to confirm whether the 1300 units excludes the 40-50 units in Blessington due to the Irish Water issue and Breege confirmed that the 40-50 units in Blessington have been excluded until the Irish Water Issue has been resolved. Cllr. Jim Ruttle then asked if a representation could be made to Wicklow County Council's Housing Section to initiate a programme of one off rural housing under the Council's Housing Policy. This proposal was seconded by Cllr. P Doran.

4. To consider Roads Report (National and Non National Roads)

Mr Declan Geraghty, District Engineer read out the N81 report prepared by Senior Executive Engineer, Mr Tom O'Leary, Roads Section. Cllr. Gerry O'Neill requested information regarding the existing maintenance spend on N81 for the period 2016-2017 and whether a response had been received from Minister Shane Ross or the TII in relation to Ms. Dixon's correspondence concerning the suspension of the N81 Tallaght to Hollywood Cross Road Improvement Scheme. Ms. Dixon confirmed that she had only received an acknowledgement of her correspondence from Minister Ross's office and no reply as yet from the TII. Cllr. Gerry O'Neill also raised the issue of the 300 metre sterilisation corridor if the Road Improvement Scheme is not going ahead, as landowners would need to know where they stand. Cllr. Gerry O'Neill proposed that Ms. Dixon write once again to the TII and invite them to attend a future Municipal District meeting to address the above concerns from the Members in relation to the suspension of the project.

An issue regarding the 100kmh speed limit at the Lamb road/junction where children are in danger in getting on and off school buses during dark mornings and evenings and traffic calming should be introduced in this area. Mr Michael Flynn, Senior Engineer advised he would look at the issue again and report back at the next Municipal District meeting.

The Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake noted that at public meetings he had attended that the preference was to improve the N81 rather than a new road and Cllr Jim Ruttle concurred "improve don't remove" was the message received from the feedback received from the public meetings.

Mr Declan Geraghty read out the Non National roads report. It was noted that the allocation for the Road Improvement Schemes is €400,000 more than last year. Mr Declan Geraghty confirmed that he required the approval by the Members for the Road Improvement Scheme submission so that it could be submitted to the Department. Cllr. Jim Ruttle proposed and 2nd by Cllr. Pat Doran.

Mr Declan Geraghty advised that €56,000 had been allocated for footpath renewal but there will be a further budget provided under the IPBMI and further details of the full budget allocation for footpath renewals will be made available for the next meeting.

The Community Involvement Scheme and Local Improvement Scheme were then discussed and it was noted that the Community Involvement Scheme has a closing date of 2nd March and the Local Improvement Scheme has a closing date of 15th March.

The issue around the speed limit at Deerpark, Shillelagh having being removed was raised as elderly members of the public had approached councillors and feel that traffic is travelling too fast for this narrow road which would include lorries meeting coming to and from the nearby Kerry Foods. Mr Dermot Graham suggested erecting warning signs approaching this stretch to slow down traffic. Mr Michael Flynn, Senior Engineer advised that speed limits were recently reviewed and By Laws enacted but any issue involving speed limits was open to the Members to review.

5. To Consider Road Works Programme for 2018

Mr Declan Geraghty thanked the Councillors who had submitted their suggestions for roads requiring improvement for inclusion in the Roads Work Programme 2018 and the Road Works Programme would now be submitted to the Department.

6. Pedestrian Crossing outside Dunlavin National School.

Mr Declan Geraghty advised that he had received the results of the recently carried out speed survey outside Dunlavin National School and the 50kmph is being observed by drivers but the new speed limit of 30kmph has led to an increase in speed violations by drivers. The Garda will be informed of the results of the speed survey. Mr Declan Geraghty highlighted that the costs involved in upgrading the Pedestrian Crossing is not in the Municipal District Budget. Cllr. Edward Timmins proposed that a decision needs to be made in relation to upgrade of the Pedestrian Crossing and the Discretionary Fund will be used to fund the €25,000 cost involved. Cllr. Jim Ruttle seconded the proposal. Cllr. Edward Timmins proposed to go ahead with upgrade traffic lights and the cost of the upgrade be taken from the Discretionary Fund. Cllr. Jim Ruttle seconded the proposal with the full support of both Cllr. Pat Doran and Cllr. Tommy Cullen.

7. Municipal District Discretionary Fund – proposed works

Mr Declan Geraghty requested that all Councillors submit their proposals for the Discretionary Fund expenditure to him before the next Municipal District Meeting as all works involved would need to be costed.

8. Baltinglass Town Renewal Group proposed use of Baltinglass Courthouse.

Cllr Tommy Cullen recommended the input from the Council in terms of technical support with full co-operation between the Council and the Baltinglass Town Renewal Group to get the project off the ground. Cllr Edward Timmins agreed with Cllr. Tommy Cullen and advised that as Wicklow County Council are the legal owners of the Courthouse they should have involvement as it is also a positive project as it promotes part of the Council's overall strategy involving tourism, heritage and employment

opportunities. The Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake advised that a discussion had taken place between himself and Ms. Theresa O'Brien from CCSD prior to the meeting and that the decision regarding the granting of a Lease/Licence may be deferred by the Members until a later date, but the grant monies can still be drawn down.

Ms. Dionne Dixon agreed to write to Ms. Theresa O'Brien and confirm that the Members had agreed to defer the decision regarding the granting of a lease/licence to the Baltinglass Town Renewal Group in relation to their application for the use of the Courthouse under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme but are keen to ensure that the grant monies are drawn down before the deadline and they are also keen to establish a strong working partnership between the Council and the Baltinglass Town Renewal Group Committee.

9. To discuss the establishment of a Town Team for Blessington

The inaugural meeting to discuss the establishment of a town team for Blessington was held on the 30th January 2018. Following that meeting the draft Terms of Reference written by members representing the community pillar of the town team were forwarded to the Members for discussion at the Municipal District Meeting. Ms. Dionne Dixon asked the Members to review the Terms of Reference and provide their comments on same. Several Members expressed their concern that the establishment of a Town Team for Blessington would lead to a duplication of work particularly as Blessington already have a very active and successful Forum and that there would be an extra strain placed on the Municipal District Council staff resources. The Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake clarified that the members of Blessington Forum wanted the Forum to remain in place and the Town Team would be established alongside the Blessington Forum. Cllr. Pat Doran thought that there should only be one Team, as is the case in Arklow as this could lead to a duplication of work. Cllr. Gerry O'Neill also felt that full representation of all six Councillors of Baltinglass Municipal District should be included on any Town Team established even if the Councillors do not attend every meeting, as this could be seen as contradicting the recent submission made to the Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee. Ms. Dionne Dixon had also received feedback from members of the other community groups within the District regarding the possibility of formal membership of Council Staff on any Town Team established. Ms. Dionne Dixon has received feedback from other community groups in the District that it would be unfair for one community group to have Council Staff as formal members and she expressed her concern that the perception could be that one community group will be given an unfair advantage over the others. Furthermore, Arklow did not have previously have a forum or any community representation and therefore a Town Team has been very successful in Arklow but there shouldn't be a "one size fits all" approach particularly as the Baltinglass Municipal District is very large and there are a lot of very active community forums and groups within the District and only District Administrator and she has to treat all community groups equally when it comes to her time and support. The Members agreed that there should be no formal representation by Council Staff and all community groups should be treated equally by the Council staff of the District. Ms. Dionne Dixon advised that following the meeting she would make the suggested amendments to the draft Terms of Reference and circulate them prior to the next meeting for the Town Team which is scheduled to take place on 27th February.

10. To consider the application for Festival Funding submitted by the West Wicklow Festival being held in Russborough House and St. Mary's Church, Blessington from 17th to 20th May 2018.

Ms. Dionne Dixon advised that she had received an application for Festival Funding from the Festival Organiser of the West Wicklow Festival. The West Wicklow Festival is a classical musical festival that had its inaugural festival last year and are looking to build upon their success this year. They will bring positive focus to Blessington and West Wicklow in general and showcase the area. The Festival has a full programme of world class musicians and artists playing over four dates in May. The National Concert Hall will also be involved in the Festival and Ms. Dionne Dixon is keen that Baltinglass Municipal District support such a fantastic Festival. Letters of support have been received from Blessington Forum, The Arts Officer of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Jim Ruttle and the former District Administrator, Ms. Susan Nichols. Ms. Dionne Dixon advised that unfortunately due to the Municipal District Festival Budget being quite small and is drawn on to fund other Festivals and the funding of Christmas Lights, sadly the full amount requested could not be met by the Municipal District's Festival Budget, however, she has recently learned that there is a new Festival Budget being available through CCSD and she suggests that the remainder of the funds requested could be applied for and she would enquire further.

Cllr. Jim Ruttle gave his full endorsement to the Festival funding application as it is a headline festival and one fully deserving the Council's recognition and support and Cllr. Gerry O'Neill seconded the funding application. Ms. Dionne Dixon agreed that she would contact Ms. Theresa O'Brien after the meeting and look for the remainder of the funds to be made available through the new Festival Budget.

11. To consider proposals for hosting a civic reception to recognised the achievements within Baltinglass Municipal District.

Ms. Dionne Dixon advised that a request had been received regarding the hosting of a civic reception to recognise the achievement of Blessington in winning the Bank of Ireland Enterprising Town Awards 2017. It was felt that the fantastic achievement deserved County recognition and therefore the County Buildings would be the most appropriate venue to hold the civic reception. Ms. Dionne Dixon advised that she would put the request to the Protocol Committee and see if permission could be granted to host the civic reception in County Buildings. The suggestion had also been made that a pair of roadside signs could be designed and made welcoming travellers to Blessington and the fact that Blessington were Enterprising Town Award winners. Ms. Dionne Dixon said she would liaise with Mr Declan Geraghty in relation to the creation of the road signs.

Ms. Dionne Dixon also displayed a series of slate awards which were provided by a local jeweller for the Wicklow County Council Long Service Awards and they were very well received by the recipients. The jeweller can etch any image onto the slate surface and the turn around time is two or three days. The advantage of this style of award is that they are totally customisable and can be etched with any image and engraved with any message. Ms. Dionne Dixon looked for suggestions for the images that would best represent the District and the suggestions made were Lughnaquilla, Russborough House, Blessington lakes, Carnew Castle and Baltinglass Hillforts. Ms. Dionne Dixon said she would source some images and contact the jeweller with a view to creating some samples.

12. Correspondence

Ms. Dionne Dixon advised that the County Wicklow PPN are creating a funding booklet for community groups and they had emailed all of the District Administrators as they are hoping to launch the booklet and would hope to also receive information at the launch from the Members of the Baltinglass Municipal District in relation to what is going on in each District. It was noted that the Baltinglass Municipal District launch was due to take place sometime in May. Ms. Dionne Dixon advised that the District Administrator of Greystones Municipal District has suggested that the launch take place at the beginning of a Municipal District Meeting and it was agreed that this would be a pragmatic approach.

13. Any other business

Severe Weather Alert "Beast from the East"

Mr Declan Geraghty advised that the District was prepared to meet the demands of the forthcoming severe weather event, there were plentiful supplies of both salt and grit and salt and grit reserves on the sides of roads were being replenished. There are three lorries, three snowploughs and three gritters in the Blessington area and there is one gritter and six JCB's in the Tinahely area as well as private contractors with snow clearing equipment that could be called upon if required. As usual practice, main roads would be the main focus initially but back roads would be severely affected if the snow drifts.

The next meeting is to be held in Tinahely on 26th March in the Courthouse in Tinahely. There being no more business Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake closed the meeting.

Signed: Vincent Blake

Cathaoirleach

Signed: Orao

District Administrator

Dated: 26 March 2018