

Minutes of the Special Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in the Civic Offices, Blessington on 11th February 2019, at 10.30 a.m.

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

In Attendance: Mr. Sean Quirke, District Manager
Mr. Declan Geraghty, District Engineer
Mr. Garvan Hickey, District Administrator
Mr. Derek Cullen, Assistant Staff Officer
Mr. Mark Devereux, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. Andrew Macken, Architect, Housing
Ms. Sorcha Walsh, Senior Planner
Ms. Lisa Rothwell, Assistant Planner

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Tommy Cullen, opened the special meeting.

1. To receive a presentation from the Housing Section on the Part 8 Housing application and to consider adoption of the Part 8.

Members received a presentation from Mr. Devereux and Mr. Macken from the Housing Section on the proposed Part 8 Housing development in Carnew. 30 housing units are proposed to be constructed as part of the development. The Cathaoirleach Cllr. Cullen noted that the proposed development had been discussed at the November meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District and welcomed the development. All members welcomed the development and noted that similar developments of social and affordable housing were required across the Municipal District.

Members also noted that prioritisation should be given to local people who are on the housing waiting list for a significant period of time in the allocation of the units. Cllr. Doran and Cllr. Cullen pointed out that previously, extra points were given to people on the housing list who lived within a certain radius of a development or a social house which became available.

Cllr. Pat Doran proposed the adoption of the Part 8 and also proposed that, as the development is an extension of Coolattin Oaks, that the name of the development also be

incorporated under the name Coolattin Oaks. This proposal was seconded by Cllr. Vincent Blake and agreed by all members.

2. To discuss the Baltinglass and Blessington Local Area Plans

The Cathaoirleach Cllr. Cullen welcomed Ms. Sorcha Walsh and Ms. Lisa Rothwell to the meeting and informed members that one of the main reasons for the special meeting was to discuss the overall development of Blessington and Baltinglass and to avail of the expertise of the Planning section. Cllr. Cullen then asked members for their opinions and concerns.

It was noted there would be no discussion on zonings and that the discussion would focus on the overall development of the town.

Members raised the following points:

- Concern at the direction development in Blessington is going in. We are limited in Blessington in comparison with the rest of County Wicklow as input from Co. Kildare has a bearing on matters.
- Danger that the area of Blessington that is in County Kildare will be developed at the expense of other areas of the town and this will put pressure on the water and the sewage system servicing the area, limiting the potential of development in other areas.
- Housing shortage in the in Blessington and the need to develop social and affordable housing options in the area for people who want to live in the locality.
- It was noted that there was a proposal of 800 – 900 units to be built a developer in the Kildare of Blessington before an Board Pleanála. Decision is expected on 22nd February. Concerns were expressed that if this development goes ahead the treatment plant could reach capacity and this would limit other plans for housing developments.
- What lessons could be learnt for other towns in Ireland in a similar situation to Blessington, with regards to being on the boundary of another county.
- Potential for a local area plan for Baltinglass similar to that for Blessington
- Members queried the potential to upgrade the water and waste treatment facilities in Blessington to facilitate both housing and economic development.
- Increased pressure on local schools with a growing population and a need to ensure the relief road is completed.

- Possibility of ring fencing a certain percentage of the area for development in the town in County Wicklow.

Cllr. O'Neill asked if the officials to consider developing Doran's Pit first for housing before the area around Avon Ri. As the area around Avon Ri is well done as a leisure and recreational area.

The District Manager, Mr. Sean Quirke informed the members that the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy is due to be adopted in the coming months. This will necessitate a review of the County Development Plan and then the Local Area Plans. He added that the Blessington LAP runs from 2013 – 2019 and the proposed development of the housing units that was mentioned will depend greatly on the development of a sewage treatment plant. Mr. Quirke stated that, regarding the relief road, Wicklow County Council is currently in discussions with Kildare County Council regarding the proposed development of a school adjoining the Kilmalum housing development. He added that there is nothing to stop members from forming views for input into the County Development Plan but that zoning in Blessington will be considered in conjunction with the review of the LAP. Mr. Quirke also stated that the land at Doran's Pit was in private ownership and the land owned by Wicklow County Council was located in the Avon Rí area. Mr. Quirke also highlighted on the land use map the areas on the map at Avon Rí that were designated for community and the area which was zoned as residential.

Cllr. Cullen enquired if the Blessington Local area plan could be incorporated into the County Development Plan similar to the situation which exists for Baltinglass. If this could be done it could expedite the situation and facilitate development in the town.

Ms. Sorcha Walsh, Senior Planner informed the members that Baltinglass falls under the remit of the County Development Plan. She added that the process of preparing the County Development Plan will begin this year and then after that is concluded the Planning department will prepare a report, which is the first stage. She added that then this information will be brought before the members for their input and the opportunity to raise any concerns. Ms. Walsh stated that the Baltinglass Plan, along with other towns similar in population, will be reviewed as part of the County Development revision. She added that Blessington cannot be reviewed under the County Development plan as the Planning and Development Act sets the size limit of towns that fall into the category of coming under the remit of the County

Development plan or Local Area plans. Ms. Walsh also stated that the adoption of the County Development Plan will take place in winter 2021. Work will then commence on the development of local area plans.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Tommy Cullen suggested that Baltinglass Municipal District contact the members of Naas Municipal District and set up a cross-boundary liaison committee that would be made up of councillors from both Municipal Districts with a purpose to discuss how to proceed with the issues that have been raised.

Ms. Walsh, Senior Planner informed the members that the Planning and Development Act does provide that a Local Area plan can provide for cross-county planning that would include planners from both authorities, with one of the planning authorities taking the lead. Ms. Walsh stated that a good outcome would be a combined plan and if the members were to meet with councillors from Naas Municipal District then Wicklow County Council would be happy to lead as the larger authority. She added that one plan would be the best solution.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Tommy Cullen proposed that Baltinglass Municipal District approach Naas Municipal District about the possibility of setting up a joint cross boundary - committee. This was seconded by Cllr. Gerry O' Neill.

3. To discuss Baltinglass Bridge junction

Cllr. Edward Timmins informed members that there are safety issues regarding this bridge. He said that the sight lines are very poor and there is a high risk for vehicle accidents. He also stated that the footpath over the bridge is very narrow and he has witnessed people falling on the footpath. Cllr. Timmins stated that he had previously proposed that Wicklow County Council put a pedestrian bridge over the Slaney, either on the north side or the south side of the existing bridge, to alleviate these safety concerns.

Cllr. Edward Timmins pointed out that a lot more money has been spent on less important projects in the county and he suggested that the money could be found if need demanded.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Tommy Cullen stated that he had previously supported Cllr. Timmins proposal and he asked if the Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council could

enquire about the purchase of 'The Dutchmans' and if there is a possibility of requesting T.I.I. funding for this? Cllr. Cullen asked the District Manager if a report could be provided for the next meeting on the feasibility of where to put the pedestrian bridge and the estimated costs involved and to request the Chief Executive to reconsider the possibility of purchasing 'The Dutchmans'.

The District Manager, Mr. Sean Quirke informed the members that Wicklow County had examined the possibility of purchasing 'The Dutchmans' in the past and after receiving consultant reports and feasibility studies it showed that it would not improve the pedestrian safety on the bridge. He added that the proposal is to build a pedestrian bridge across the north side of the Slaney but there are a number of difficulties involved in this also. Mr. Quirke added that funding is an issue and that although 'The Dutchmans' could be purchased there would be large costs involved in the demolition of the property and the costs incurred thereafter. Mr. Quirke stated that he would be able to provide the report, as requested by the Cathaoirleach and he added that the priority of the Council is pedestrian safety on this bridge.

Cllr. Edward Timmins proposed that Wicklow County Council examine the prospect of purchasing 'The Dutchmans' and the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Tommy Cullen seconded this.

Any other Business

Poster Free Town

Cllr. Gerry O' Neill requested that the item of Blessington becoming an election poster free town be put on the agenda for the next ordinary meeting.

Heritage

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Tommy Cullen proposed that a heritage presentation be given at the next Baltinglass Municipal District meeting. This was agreed by the members.

Condolences

Cllr. Vincent Blake offered his sympathies to the families of Mr. Eamonn Byrne, Mr. Michael (Mick) Murphy and Mr. Edward (Eddie) Boylan on their recent passing. This was echoed by the other members.

A minutes silence was then held as a mark of respect.

The meeting was closed by the Cathaoirleach Cllr. Cullen.

Signed:


CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed:


DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated:

25/02/2019