

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in the Courthouse Arts Centre, Tinahely on 26th of March 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. Sean Quirke, District Manager
Mr. Declan Geraghty, District Engineer
Mr. Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer
Ms. Dionne Dixon, District Administrator
Ms. Geraldine Jordan, Assistant Staff Officer

Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake opened the meeting and thanked Maggie Gallagher, Artistic Director for the Courthouse Arts Centre for providing the venue. He commented that this was the first meeting to be held in Tinahely since the Municipal Districts were established over 4 years ago. He also welcomed Debra from the Wicklow People to the meeting.

1. To confirm the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 26th of February 2018.

Cllr. Pat Doran proposed the confirmation of the Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 26th of February 2018, seconded by Cllr. Jim Ruttle.

2. Matters arising.

Cllr. Jim Ruttle enquired over the status of the Blessington to Hollywood – N81 works. Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake stated that it would be discussed further under item 4 of the Agenda.

3. Presentation from Tinahely Courthouse Arts Committee.

Maggie Gallagher, Artistic Director informed the members of a brief history of the Courthouse. It was built in 1843 and had fallen into disrepair by 1950s. With grant aid the courthouse was restored over a 10 year period and was opened as a centre for arts, culture and heritage in 1996. It is the longest established, independent Arts Centre in the County. Maggie acknowledged this success to the hard work of its board over the years, funding from the Arts Council, Wicklow County Council and Tuas. The Courthouse caters for various age groups and abilities throughout Wicklow, North Wexford and Carlow attracting over 10,000 visitors last year. They hold adult and children art classes as well as providing a venue for writers groups, Meditation groups etc. Tinahely Courthouse

bought the Market House which they currently rent to Wicklow County Council for use as a library. On the 2nd floor they rent 2 rooms for private use and 3rd is used as a teenage studio.

With the continued support from the Arts Council, Wicklow County Council, CE scheme and their own income from making it a profitably venture the Courthouse hopes to continue with maintaining the building, upgrading light and sound equipment, provide employment and continue to provide a great venue for arts and culture to people of Wicklow.

Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake thanked Maggie and also the members for their support and funding for the Courthouse.

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

National Roads Report

Mr. Declan Geraghty, District Engineer read out the National Roads Report compiled by Mr. Tom O'Leary, Senior Executive Engineer, regarding the ongoing projects and planned works on the N81. Mr. Geraghty also highlighted that those areas of damaged pavement on N81 at Hempstown and Piper's Stone were brought to the attention of the TII at a recent meeting. He also highlighted that his proposal to extend the existing concrete kerb along the edge of the N81 for a distance of 1km north of Hudson's was also being considered as potential solution to the annual difficulties along this stretch of road with dirt and dust affecting the road markings. He also highlighted that the TII were looking at creating detour routes for the N81 north of Blessington.

Cllr. Edward Timmins questioned if the full allocation of funding for Knockroe Bends would be spent in 2018. Mr. Declan Geraghty indicated that the construction tendering would commence around May 2018. Mr. Sean Quirke, District Manager responded that the TII were committed to the project and that the funding would roll over into 2019 if required. Cllr. Edward Timmins also highlighted that he was anxious for the R747/N81 junction in Baltinglass to be completed in 2018. He also raised concerns regarding the footpaths on the eastern side of Edwards Street.

Cllr. Jim Ruttle queried if there was any progress in relation to the pedestrian footbridge in Baltinglass beside the river. Mr. Sean Quirke responded that there had been no progress since the last update provide by Ms. Margaret Hartnett, Senior Executive Engineer.

Cllr. Tommy Cullen enquired about the possibility of the Council purchasing Dutchmans Inn in Baltinglass. He outlined that this was a great opportunity to purchase this building and grounds and would lend the opportunity to fix the traffic congestion at a minimum cost to the council. Mr. Sean Quirke advised that an offer was made by Wicklow County Council to the Auctioneer but the offer was rejected. Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake requested that a report in relation to the footbridge could be completed for the next meeting. Mr. Sean Quirke advised he would talk to Margaret Hartnett and get an update for the next meeting.

Cllr. Tommy Cullen proposed a meeting should be held with TII regarding the long term plan for the development of the N81 as it would appear that the TII are spending a lot of money on the road networks in the West of Ireland and very little in County Wicklow.

Cllr. Jim Ruttle noted that the TII's letter to Ms. Dionne Dixon, District Administrator, of 13th March does not really address all of the issues concerned and he suggested that the Municipal District should take a proactive lead with the assistance of the Wicklow TD's lobbying the TII to have a full investigation as to why the N81 Tallaght to Hollywood Cross Road Improvement Scheme was indefinitely suspended from the National Development Plan. Cllr. Ruttle suggested that a public meeting be held and the TII invited to attend said meeting in order to address all the concerns and issues raised. Ms. Dionne Dixon advised that following February's Municipal District meeting she had written to the TII on the 7th March and had requested that a member of the TII attend a Municipal District meeting to address all of the concerns raised by the Councillors and she is awaiting to hear from the TII further in this regard.

Non National Roads Report

Mr. Declan Geraghty read out the Non National Roads Report and noted that there was very little change to the report from the previous meeting due to other understandable work pressures. He advised that the Schedule of Works had been agreed and that the design and tendering process has commenced and all Works should commence from May onwards with a view to works being fully completed over the summer months. He noted that four applications had being received under the Community Improvement Scheme (CIS) and four applications had been received under the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS). Mr. Sean Quirke noted that there had been a total of 30 applications received County wide for LIS's and that applications under the CIS had been submitted to the Department last Friday.

Cllr. Pat Doran commended the work undertaken by the engineering and outdoor staff during the recent snow events. All the other Councillors attached themselves to these compliments. Cllr. Cullen questioned if there was going to be more funding made available and highlighted in his opinion that the lack of outdoor staff resources resulted in footpaths not being cleared as quickly. Cllr. Jim Ruttle also highlighted the works undertaken by private contractors in clearing roads which was highly effective. Mr. Sean Quirke advised that he had commended the work undertaken by these contractors at the full Council Meeting and that the full picture regarding the cost involved in dealing with the both recent severe weather events is not yet available.

Cllr. Gerry O'Neill raised the issue of the bus stop at Hollywood and the relevant responsibility regarding the bridge at Knockerin between Wicklow County Council and the ESB. Mr. Declan Geraghty advised that the Hollywood bus stop issue and other small safety issues had been forwarded to Tom O'Leary to deal with.

Mr. Declan Geraghty indicated that he estimated that the clean-up costs would be in excess of €150,000 for the Blessington Area and Mr. Dermot Graham Executive Engineer, indicated he would expect a cost of a €100,000 for the Tinahely area. All the Councillors enquired if addition funding would be made available to cover this cost and the repair to damaged roads. Mr. Declan Geraghty and Mr. Dermot Graham indicated that they had not received all of the invoices for the clear up operation so a final figure is not available and at this stage they have moved to putting a final cost on damage roads requiring repair. Mr. Sean Quirke advised that this issue would be discussed at the next District Engineers meeting on Thursday. Mr. Declan Geraghty indicated that a review of the Roads programme may have to take place in the absence of additional funding. The Members

suggested submitting a claim for extra money to alert the Department to the severe damage to roads in the District. Mr. Sean Quirke agreed this was a good idea.

5. Schedule of Municipal District Works.

The 2018 Schedule of Municipal District Works was distributed to the Members. Mr. Sean Quirke indicated that the centrally administered expenditure of €2,908,803 was the centralised council costs relevant to the Municipal District. The figure of €5,323,300 is the Municipal District Works expenditure spent locally within the District and this was the figure to be adopted. Cllr. Edward Timmins proposed its adoption and all Members adopted it.

6. Municipal District Discretionary Fund

The Discretionary Fund Allocation lists of proposed works which had been identified by Mr. Declan Geraghty and Mr. Dermot Graham were distributed to the Members. Both lists identified a number of proposed works which they believe could be carried out from the Discretionary Fund for both the Blessington and the Tinahely areas. Mr. Dermot Graham indicated that the lists included the various issues that had been brought to the attention of both Engineers by the Members over the preceding 12 months.

Mr. Declan Geraghty informed members that an allocation of €131,250 was made available to the District by Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurance (IPBMI) based on "accident hotspots" with a view to eliminating future claims by fixing trip hazards on various footpaths throughout the District. Heat Maps detailing these accident hot spots were issued to the District Engineers by the IPBMI. Both Cllr. Edward Timmins and Cllr. Tommy Cullen requested that these Heat Maps be made available to them. Cllr. Edward Timmins queried if the installation of street lighting at these accident hot spots would be more beneficial rather than footpath repairs but Mr. Sean Quirke disagreed indicating that the allocation was for the reduction / elimination of risks.

Mr. Sean Quirke informed the Members that an allocation of €168,750 was available to be spent under Public Realm Works. In addition there is an allocation of €56,250 made available to carry out footpath renewal works within the District. This €56,250 could be considered as part of the Discretionary Fund spending if spent on footpath renewal works. This would increase the Discretionary Funding to approx €225,000 for the District (or €37,500 available to each Member). Mr. Declan Geraghty advised the Members that the footpath renewal allocation of €56,250 had to be spent on renewing existing footpath assets and not on new builds.

Mr. Declan Geraghty requested that the Members should advise the relevant Area Engineer of their proposed Schemes that they wish to have considered under the Discretionary Fund well in advance of the next meeting so that they can be costed and put before the Members for consideration at the next Municipal District meeting.

7. Correspondence

Ms. Dionne Dixon distributed to the Members the letter of 13th March that she had received from the TII which had been discussed under item 4 of the Agenda earlier in the meeting. She also

advised that she had yet to receive a full reply from Minister Ross other than an acknowledgement of her letter of 25th January.

Ms. Dionne Dixon further advised that she has yet to receive a response from Mr. Joe Lane, Director of Services, Housing Section in relation to the Representation made by the Members in relation to the possibility of the reactivation of one off rural cottages under the Housing Programme but she will send a further reminder.

Ms. Dionne Dixon also highlighted the email circulated recently by Mr. Des O'Brien, Director of Services, Planning & Development in relation to the Circular PL 02/2018 advising that the merits of individual planning applications are not to be discussed at Municipal District/Area Committee and Council Meetings.

8. Any Other Business

Mr. Sean Quirke informed Members there was an allocation of €3,000 has been made available to the District for Twinning. He further advised that this was the first time that Baltinglass Municipal District had requested and received funding under this category.

Cllr. Jim Ruttle stated that the renewal of white line road markings was still required on a certain section of the road across the Wicklow Gap and that white line markings should be treated as a separate manner to surface dressing works. Mr. Declan Geraghty informed him that this particular section of road was in the Wicklow Municipal Area and that he had mentioned the issue to the Wicklow Municipal District Engineer.

Cllr. Tommy Cullen asked that an agenda item to discuss dog fouling on footpaths would be included at the next Municipal District meeting.

Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake reminded Members that a Civic Reception is to be held in County Buildings to recognise the achievement of Blessington winning their category in the Bank of Ireland Enterprising Town Awards in 2017 and he encouraged all Members to attend.

Cllr. Gerry O Neill asked about the Council's position in relation to blocked and over flowing foul sewers on a group of houses in Blessington and concerns that the overflowing material poses a public health hazard to people using the footpaths. Mr. Declan Geraghty informed him it was an issue for Irish Water and it had been brought to their attention.

Cllr. Jim Ruttle asked about the parking situation at Manor Kilbride School. Mr. Declan Geraghty informed him there was no Council owned land to provide for car parking and the car parking situation was a matter for the Department of Education, as an employer and the operator of the School to deal with.

The next meeting will be held in Blessington on the 23rd April 2018 at 10.30 am. There being no more business Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake closed the meeting.

Signed: Siobhán Blake

Cathaoirleach

Signed: WAO

District Administrator

Dated: 23/4/18

