

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in the Civic Offices, Blessington on 22nd of January 2018, at 10.30 a.m.

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

In Attendance: Mr. Sean Quirke, Director of Services
Mr. Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer
Mr. Declan Geraghty, District Engineer
Ms. Dionne Dixon, District Administrator
Ms. Sharon Mulhall, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Councillor Pat Doran

Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake opened the meeting and welcomed everyone and wished all a happy new year. He then asked those present to observe a minutes silence for Robert Jordan, former employee of Wicklow County Council in the Tinahely area who had passed away recently and also for Pauline Cleary the wife of Joe Cleary former GSS from Tinahely. Mr Dermot Graham and Mr Sean Quirke paid tribute to Mr Jordan and passed on sympathies on behalf of the staff of Wicklow County Council.

1. To confirm the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 18th of December 2017

It was proposed by Cllr. Gerry O'Neill, seconded by Cllr. Jim Ruttle and agreed to confirm and sign minutes of the Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated the 18th of December 2017.

2. To receive a presentation from Baltinglass Town Renewal Group regarding their proposed application under the Town and Village renewal scheme for the use of Baltinglass Courthouse.

A representation from the Baltinglass Town Team comprising of Mr Billy Timmins, Ms Siobhan Geoghegan, Ms Rachel Kane and Mr Paul Gorry gave a presentation to the members present about their hopes to convert the Courthouse in Baltinglass as a hub for co-working and an interpretative centre for the vast ring forts that are located in Baltinglass and surrounding areas which is rich in Neolithic heritage. The Baltinglass Town Renewal Group has secured €88,000 under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and hoped to use this money to kick start the project. They outlined the huge potential they felt the area had for tourism owing to the ring

forts and the link this would have to the current tourist initiative, Ancient East and also outlined the benefits they felt a co working or hot desk scheme would have in the area. In addition it was proposed that local organisations such as the West Wicklow Choral Society, local drama groups, Citizens Information would also have the use of the Courthouse. The group advised that they plan to organise a Public Open Day in mid February at the Courthouse to share their plans and vision for the Courthouse with the public. It was agreed by the members that they all felt the plans had great merit especially since the Courthouse is currently unoccupied and has great potential, but the members would need to see further details/information in relation to the governance of the project. It was agreed that following the meeting, Ms. Dionne Dixon would request the group to provide a written proposal outlining the structure/governance for the running and the administration of the Project and also outlining the support that is required from the Baltinglass Municipal District. Once the proposal outlining the specific details has been received, it will put back before the Members to be voted upon at the next Municipal District meeting on February 26th 2018.

3. Matters Arising

Ms Dionne Dixon advised the meeting that she had received some correspondence in relation to matters raised at previous meeting. She had advised that the TII had reverted with a reply in relation to the problem of wild deer crossing on the N81 at Tallaght and Crooksling, Co. Dublin and they advised that the installation of wildlife fencing is not always appropriate as it can create a barrier to wildlife; it can cause fragmentation and isolation of populations and, more critically it can prevent wild animals escaping from the roadway should they find themselves curtailed along it. Regarding the "Deer Crossing" warning signage, there is a policy currently being worked on by the TII's Environmental Policy and Compliance Department addressing the issue on the National road network and the locations referred to in Ms. Dixon's letter have been noted and will be monitored.

The Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht acknowledged receipt of Ms. Dixon's correspondence in relation to the national deer population would revert with a reply in due course.

Ms. Dixon also received an email response from Dr Ferdia Marnell, Head of Animal Ecology of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in relation to the concern over the impact of the introduction of the Red Kite on the Native Hare, particularly the leveret population. Dr Ferdia requested that any concerns or evidence in relation to this can be forwarded on to him and a new national survey of hare numbers will be undertaken in the spring of 2018 with the results available on the NPWS website in early 2019 which will provide an update on the national situation.

Ms. Dixon advised the meeting that the next meeting of the Joint Policing Committee Working Group "Tackling Rural Crime" is to take place on the 1st of February 2018 at 10.30 am in Blessington Civic Offices.

An email from the Local Area Boundary Committee was also mentioned and the members are invited to make submissions on review of the current electoral area by 19th of February 2018 at 5pm. (discussed further at the meeting under AOB).

4. Roads Report (National and Non National)

As the roadworks budget allocation for 2018 has not been finalised as yet there is no report on non national roads. A report from Mr. Tom O'Leary, Senior Executive Engineer in relation to the N81 was circulated to the meeting. Mr Sean Quirke advised the meeting that €2.5million had been allocated to the realignment of Knockroe Bends and it was hoped it would be gone out for tender before year end. He also advised that €10,000 had been allocated to Hangmans bend, Irish Town, Tuckmill and Whitestown Lower in order to progress schemes in these areas. The members discussed the situation with the dirt on the N81 north of Blessington. Mr Declan Geraghty, District Engineer, advised that the problem of the dirt on the N81 is a perennial problem and is particularly bad during the months of December to March. In the warmer months the dirt is dry and the wind lifts it off the road. The lanes are consistently swept by two road sweepers twice a week. He advised that he is in consultation with Mr Tom O'Leary and TII to try and get a solution to this issue as the road effectively needs to be washed and the logistics of this in relation to how it can be done and the traffic management need to be resolved.

The member then discussed the recent decision by TII not to progress the plans for Tallaght to Hollywood cross upgrade on the N81. It was agreed that a letter would be sent to Minister Shane Ross and TII asking for an explanation as to why the plan was abandoned and asking what if any other measure would be taken in its place.

5. To Consider Road Works Programme for 2018

A report on the proposed roadwork's programme for 2018 was circulated to the members. Roads at the members had submitted for consideration to be included in this year's programme had been surveyed and the results of the survey were included. The members were advised that the roads currently on the programme were part of a three year plan and for the most part were the conclusion of these roads. The issue is to be revisited when the funding is in place for this year. Cllr Cullen asked that the issue of a mobile road sweeper be put on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting. Cllr Cullen also asked that the road in Woodfield Cross be given immediate attention. Mr Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer, advised he would look at the issue.

6. To discuss the Pedestrian Crossing outside Dunlavin National School.

The meeting was advised that the quotation of €25,658 mentioned at the previous meeting for the upgrade of the existing pedestrian crossing outside of Dunlavin National School was in fact correct and the annual cost to employ a School Traffic Warden was in the region of €11,000. Mr Declan Geraghty advised that neither he, the local Garda or the Senior Roads Engineer were in favour of installing lights /upgrading the existing pedestrian crossing, as the problems complained of by the parents associations are caused by bad driver behaviour and not the existing pedestrian crossing. Mr Geraghty advised that

he has arranged for a speed survey to be conducted and will have the results before the next meeting. Cllr Cullen asked it to be noted for the replacement of the granite paving slabs in Dunlavin was not, he felt, in line with the decision made at a District meeting and that he would take no personal responsibility for any accidents that may occur in relation to the paving slabs. Mr Sean Quirke said that the employment of a School Traffic Warden came with its own issues in relation to recruiting the person and also with the "bullying" behaviour that the traffic wardens receive from unhappy motorists can present its own difficulties. Cllr Timmins felt that this in itself was not a valid reason not to employ a School Traffic Warden. Cllr O'Neill pointed out that if certain motorists are deliberately ignoring flashing lights, they will ignore a School Traffic Warden. As no conclusion was reached at the meeting it was agreed that a final decision on the issue would be made at the next meeting.

7. To Consider proposals for hosting a civic reception to recognise the achievements within Baltinglass Municipal District

Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake advised the meeting that he wished to recognise the achievement of Blessington in securing the Enterprising Towns Leinster Award. A number of ideas were discussed, including the possibility of a tree being planted, or a bench being dedicated or a plaque erected on a wall in the town to mark the achievement. The members were asked to help with some suggestions and the Blessington Forum would be asked to put forward ideas also. In relation to recognising other individuals or group achievements throughout the year, Ms Dixon is to try and source a local artist that may commission a piece of crystal or similar award that can be engraved with a unique image of West Wicklow such as Lughnaquilla Mountain and these awards when made can be kept in the office of the District Administrator and made available for presentation to groups or individuals as and when required.

8. AOB

The Members discussed if the Baltinglass Municipal District would make a group submission to the Local Area Boundary Committee for the Review of Local Electoral Areas 2018, as Baltinglass Municipal District has been mentioned that its geographical size is too large. It was proposed by Cllr Edward Timmins and seconded by Cllr Vincent Blake that a group submission would be made stating that the Members were happy with the status quo and did not want a change to the geographic integrity of the district. Members were also invited to make individual submissions to the Committee if they so wished to do so.

Cllr Vincent Blake advised the meeting that he has been asked to represent Baltinglass Municipal District at the St Patricks Day Parade in Nottingham, U.K. and he would be attending. The members asked that a representative from Housing would be asked to attend the next meeting to discuss the current housing issues in the District. Cllr Blake advised that he wished to hold the March meeting in the Courthouse in Tinahely on the 26th of March 2018 this was agreed by the members and that there would be a presentation made by the Tinahely Courthouse Committee. There being no more business Cathaoirleach Vincent Blake closed the meeting. The next meeting will be held on the 26th of February 2018 in the Civic Offices in Blessington.

Signed: Lucretia Ede
Cathaoirleach

Signed: Chao

District Administrator

Dated: 26th February 2018