

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in the Civic Offices, Blessington on 25th 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. Dermot Graham, Acting District Engineer
Mr. Garvan Hickey, District Administrator
Mr. Derek Cullen, Assistant Staff Officer
Mr. Frank Corcoran, Blessington Heritage Trust

Apologies: Mr. Declan Geraghty, District Engineer

Before opening the Ordinary meeting, the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Tommy Cullen noted that Cllr. O' Neill had requested to have a suspension of Standing Orders to discuss the issues facing tenants in the business units at Blessington Credit Union.

Cllr. Timmins proposed that this item be discussed after item 4 on the agenda. This was unanimously agreed by the members. The suspension of standing orders was proposed by Cllr. O'Neill and seconded by Cllr. Timmins.

- 1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 28th January 2019.**

Cllr. Blake proposed the confirmation of the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 28th January 2019 and this was seconded by Cllr. O' Neill.

2. To confirm and sign minutes of the Special Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 11th February 2019.

Amendment

Cllr. Timmins requested that the minutes are amended following the points which had been proposed by Cllr. Timmins at the Special Meeting.

'We should go ahead as soon as possible and develop part of the council land in Burgage for social housing as it is the only substantial lands in the council's ownership in the town. This land is already zoned for housing'

Cllr. O' Neill also requested an amendment to show that, in relation to social housing in Blessington, he had stated the following:

'That land at Roadstone would be more suitable for social housing as it is a lot nearer to the town than the land at Avon Rí and that he would never hold up the development of social housing.'

Cllr. Cullen noted that the land at Burgage is Council owned and is ready to be developed whereas land elsewhere could be quite costly to purchase.

Following the amendments, Cllr. Timmins proposed the confirmation of the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 11th February 2019 and this was seconded by Cllr. Ruttle.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. To receive a presentation on the Heritage of Blessington from Blessington Heritage Trust.

Cllr. Cullen welcomed Mr. Corcoran to the meeting and noted the importance of heritage in the Blessington area.

Mr. Frank Corcoran gave a detailed presentation on the heritage of Blessington and in particular the Glending Valley.

Following the presentation the members thanked Mr. Corcoran for his presentation and there was a detailed discussion of the heritage of the Blessington area and the importance of making people aware of it.

Cllr. Timmins noted that the development of recreational access to the heritage site of Glending woods could tie in with Irelands 'Ancient East' tourism market. Cllr. Timmins also noted that it would be beneficial if the council could incorporate the heritage in the Baltinglass Municipal District into the 'Ancient East' market. Cllr. Timmins proposed that recreational access to the heritage sites and the development of information panels should be explored in partnership with the Heritage office.

Cllr. O' Neill queried if the G.A.A. entrance would provide safer access to the walk in Glending Woods and he also asked if the land at Glending was in the ownership of the OPW or Roadstone.

Mr. Frank Corcoran stated that via the G.A.A. grounds is the most logical access and all of the land is in the ownership of the Office of Public Works.

Cllr. Ruttle asked if it would be possible to get a university to undertake a dig at Glending Woods which would explore the significance of the site. Mr. Corcoran noted that this was a possibility and partnerships had been developed in other areas to carry out archaeological excavations.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cullen thanked Mr. Corcoran for his presentation and added that it is vitally important for the Baltinglass Municipal District Council to progress a plan to create a

public access to the Glending Woods as it is important to make people aware of this heritage. Cllr. Cullen added that he is aware that the District Engineer, Mr. Declan Geraghty is currently looking at three different options relating to access to these woods. Cllr. Cullen also noted that heritage is playing an increasingly important part of local government.

5. Notice of Motion in the name of Cllr. Gerry O' Neill, Baltinglass Municipal District (25.02.19).

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cullen said that Cllr. O' Neill had requested a suspension of standing orders in order to discuss a notice of motion submitted in relation to the issue facing tenants in the business premises at Blessington Credit Union.

Cllr. Gerry O' Neill stated a number of tenants who are currently renting units at Blessington Credit Union have been told that they will have to vacate these units in the coming weeks. Cllr. O' Neill stated that this whole procedure is unacceptable and that the Credit Union have cited Credit Union Act 1997 as the reason the business had to move. Cllr. O' Neill noted that other credit unions have let premises out to small businesses. He also noted that there has always been a good relationship between the Credit Union and Baltinglass Municipal District council. Cllr. O' Neill requested that Baltinglass Municipal District Council write to Blessington Credit Union expressing concern. He added that there is a huge amount of support for these tenants as the businesses they run are an important part of the town. Cllr. O' Neill added that a letter had been sent to the management of the Credit Union following the public meeting that took place earlier in February and that it was referred to the chairman of the Credit Union. Cllr. O' Neill stated that correspondence was sent back from the Credit Union asking the tenants involved to get legal representation in order to correspond with the Credit Unions legal representatives.

Cllr. Timmins also expressed his support for the tenants. He stated that the Credit Union has a record of supporting small businesses and that hopefully this is an aberration that can be solved. Cllr. Timmins stated that he agrees with Cllr. O' Neill's proposal to write to the Credit Union to discuss the matter in a constructive manner.

Cllr. Ruttle noted that this was not about personalities but about supporting small businesses and it was important to listen to all sides.

Cllr. O' Neill proposed the following motion *“That Baltinglass Municipal District write to the management of Blessington Credit Union expressing our concern regarding the proposed eviction of the tenants and wish to meet with you as a matter of urgency to discuss this matter”*

This motion was seconded by Cllr. Jim Ruttle and agreed unanimously.

6. To discuss the development of the N81.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cullen informed the members that there is a meeting in Dublin this coming Friday 1st March 2019 of the Eastern and Mid Regional Authority to discuss the draft Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy. Cllr. Cullen added that the details of the submission cannot be discussed today but the support of the members is requested to submit a submission noting the importance of the N81 to the economic development of the area.

Concern was expressed by members that the proposed development of the N81 would be omitted from the final EMRA Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy.

Cllr. Edward Timmins outlined the submission from Wicklow County Council, made in November, that this Council supports the inclusion of the N81 development in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, is vital. Cllr. Timmins added that it is essential that the development of the N81 paragraph is retained in the final strategy.

Cllr. Cullen noted that submissions on the draft strategy had to be submitted to the Director of EMRA by 1 O'Clock and proposed the following motion

“That the N81 Tallaght to Hollywood scheme including linkage roads from Baltinglass and Dunlavin to the M9/N9 be reinstated into the Draft Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy 2019 – 2031.”

Cllr. Blake seconded the motion and noted that it is vitally important we insist that the N81 is included in the strategy. Cllr. Blake also noted that it was also important to follow up on having the

ring road around Blessington developed. Cllr. Ruttle noted that the development of the ring road had suffered from a lack of investment and the economic crash.

The members agreed to offer their support on this submission and Cllr. Cullen stated that he will have an update on the Agenda at next month's meeting.

7. To consider Roads Reports (national and non-national roads).

The acting District Engineer, Mr. Dermot Graham circulated the national roads reports to the members and proceeded to read out same.

Cllr. Timmins referred to Knockroe Bend and asked why the progress is slow? Cllr. Timmins also asked if this project had been re-tendered.

Cllr. O' Neill stated that he understood the Knockroe scheme had begun last year. Cllr. O' Neill then asked how much has been spent so far on archaeological digs and if these were necessary.

Mr. Dermot Graham stated that the consultants for the Knockroe scheme were appointed for different stages as it is not tendered for one consultant to carry out the full project. Mr. Graham added that the commencement date for this will likely be in the next few months.

District Manager, Mr. Sean Quirke informed the members that there were a number of important phases that are required to be carried out, including an archaeology survey. Mr. Quirke stated that he will provide a figure on how much has been spent for the next meeting.

The Acting District Engineer, Mr. Dermot Graham circulated the Non- national roads report to the members and proceeded to read out same. Item 10 (Discretionary Expenditure 2019 projects was also incorporated into this item.

Cllr. Vincent Blake requested an update on the works at Kevin Street in Tinahely for the March meeting.

Cllr. Timmins noted that the footpath in Baltinglass at Edward Street were in a bad state on the left side and he requested an update.

Cllr. O' Neill asked what it means that allocations are "not yet available" for the Blessington Area for the Community Involvement Schemes and Local Improvement Schemes (CIS' and LIS'). Cllr. O' Neill also asked what was the criteria that has changed on the LIS forms.

Mr. Dermot Graham stated that the works for Kevin Street were identified last year and a specialist contractor has now been engaged. Mr. Graham added that he expects the work to be carried out before the middle of summer while he also added that additional funding is expected. In relation to Edward Street, Mr. Graham stated that the issue is that the footpath is lower than the road. He added that the IPB funding is to carry out risk reduction. Mr. Graham noted, in relation to the CIS' and LIS' that nothing has been announced for Blessington as yet and the criteria that has changed is related to a closing date being included this year as last year there was no closing date.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cullen asked the District Administrator, Mr. Garvan Hickey if he could compile a Speed Limit request for the next Council meeting and he asked if all the Councillors could provide Mr. Hickey with any concerns they wish to be included in the report relating to speed limits. This was agreed by members. Mr. Hickey asked if members could submit their concerns by the 19th March to give time for the report to be compiled.

8. To discuss the potential developments of allotments in the Baltinglass MD area.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cullen informed the members that he requested to have this item on the agenda because there were a lot of people looking for allotments from various housing estates who may not have large gardens. Cllr. Cullen added that there is a growing movement of healthy living and healthy eating and more people would like to be able to grow their own vegetables. He added that there is an obligation on the council to provide allotments for people, if there is land available in the area.

Cllr. Jim Ruttle agreed that this was a good idea and added that this was tried a number of years ago in Carrig Glen but the housing department vetoed the use of the land as they stated

that it may be used for housing in future, which never materialised. Cllr. Ruttle asked if Baltinglass Municipal District could examine what can be done in the area of allotments and put out expressions of interest. Cllr. Ruttle also requested that a report be provided for the next meeting clarifying what land the council owns that may possibly be used for allotments.

Cllr. O' Neill stated that he had also been approached about this issue and he added that every local authority house should have access to allotments as it is a healthy interest.

Cllr. Doran stated that there is an allotment scheme in Aughrim that is working very well. He added that it is run on private land but it is very successful.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cullen pointed out that access to any available allotments should be given to people from the local estates and to the local schools. Cllr. Cullen asked the other members if they are in agreement with Cllr. Ruttle's suggestion that a report be provided for the next meeting clarifying what land the council owns. This was agreed by the members.

9. To discuss the issue of dog fouling in public areas.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cullen stated that dog fouling is a big issue within the towns and villages of Wicklow. Cllr. Cullen requested that a report be provided on what measures Baltinglass Municipal District are taking to alleviate this problem and he also asked for a report on where the €2,000 from his 2018 discretionary fund had been spent.

Cllr. O' Neill stated that there is only a small percentage of people who don't clean up after their dogs but the majority do clean up. Cllr. O' Neill also said that no matter how many signs we put up it will not deter the small percentage of people who don't clean up.

Cllr. Doran stated that local parks, GAA pitches and footpaths are being littered with dog fouling. He also stated that the Council must put up signs because it has gotten so bad but wondered if the signs would have any effect.

The District Administrator, Mr. Hickey stated that this issue is not unique to Baltinglass Municipal District and was an issue across the county. Mr. Hickey added that Naas

Municipal District have invested heavily in the area of preventing and policing dog fouling and it is still not resolving the issue. He added that an educational programme is probably needed. In relation to Cllr. Cullen's discretionary spend of €2,000, Mr. Hickey stated that this money was spent on signage but this can be checked.

Cllr. Ruttle asked if there is a possibility of looking into a targeted response and can the information gathered be used to write to people, using information such as dog licences?

Cllr. O' Neill informed the members that Mr. Noel Nolan, Blessington Tidy Towns is involved in the clean up of dog fouling in Blessington. Cllr. O' Neill proposed a suspension of standing orders so that Mr. Nolan is allowed to speak on the issue for a few minutes. This was seconded by Cllr. Jim Ruttle.

Mr. Noel Nolan gave a short talk on the effects of dog fouling, including the health and safety dangers. Mr. Nolan added that he would be very grateful if Baltinglass Municipal District could help in any way to alleviate the problem. Mr. Nolan noted that various measures had been undertaken over the years but had limited success, irresponsible dog owners ignored signs and it was very difficult to prosecute anyone.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cullen thanked Mr. Nolan for his contribution on behalf of all the members. Cllr. Cullen then stated that education is important and he suggested that leaflets be dropped to households and to local schools. He added that if the €2,000 has not been spent he would like if this money could be spent on preparing leaflets and if there is anything remaining then it could go towards signage.

Cllr. Timmins proposed that Baltinglass Municipal District erect more signage to deter dog fouling. This proposal was seconded by Cllr. O' Neill.

10. Discretionary Expenditure 2019 projects

The Discretionary Expenditure 2019 projects list was distributed as part of the roads report under item 9 and was unanimously agreed by the members.

11. To consider the development of a recognition programme to recognise the achievements of individuals and groups within the Baltinglass Municipal District.

The District Administrator, Mr. Hickey informed the members that they need to decide on certain aspects of this recognition programme, which included if the awards are going to be formal or informal, if they will be one off awards or an annual event and if they will be done in partnership with another organisation or if Baltinglass Municipal District should seek sponsorship. Mr. Hickey also listed out the categories that are included in this programme.

Cllr. Blake stated that this is a new programme for this Municipal District and the councillors should take a look at other Municipal Districts to see how they have managed it. Cllr. Blake suggested that a template be prepared for this going forward.

Cllr. Timmins supported Cllr. Blake's suggestion and he added that it would be a good idea to have this as an annual event. Cllr. Timmins also stated that he didn't think there should be a limit on the categories.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cullen stated that this should centre on public service to their communities. District Administrator, Mr. Hickey asked members that if they have any suggestions to email him directly.

12. To consider the following motion regarding election posters for the Local and European Elections 2019.

"That Baltinglass Municipal District seeks to have the Main Streets of the Towns and the Main Streets of the Villages within the Baltinglass Municipal District to be designated as election poster free areas."

District Administrator, Mr. Hickey informed the members that this motion was developed out of recommendations from members at the February Special Meeting and also noted that the Municipal District can pass the motion but it is not legally binding. Mr. Hickey added that this proposal would only be a recommendation by Baltinglass Municipal District councillors.

After a brief discussion between the councillors the following motion was agreed by members

“That Baltinglass Municipal District seeks to have inside the 60KM or less speed limit zones of the Towns and Villages within the Baltinglass Municipal District to be designated as election poster free areas”

Cllr. O’Neill proposed the adoption and it was seconded by Cllr. Ruttle. Cllr. Cullen expressed his hope that members and all election candidates would observe the motion. District Manager, Mr. Sean Quirke informed the members that any new candidates who put themselves forward for the local elections will be made aware of this motion.

13. Correspondence

Swimming Pool

District Administrator, Mr. Hickey, informed the members that consultants, Holohan Leisure, are carrying out a feasibility report on the proposed swimming pool and are due to meet with the West Wicklow Swimming Pool Committee members on Tuesday 26th February 2019. Mr. Hickey added that it is hoped to have a feasibility report completed by mid March.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cullen requested that this council ask the committee to attend the Baltinglass Municipal District meeting in March and to provide a report.

West Wicklow Drama Festival

District Administrator, Mr. Hickey, informed the members that a letter had been received from West Wicklow Festival requesting funding of €5,000 in order to support delivery of the 2019 Festival. The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Tommy Cullen requested that this correspondence is circulated to the members and a decision will be made at the next meeting in March.

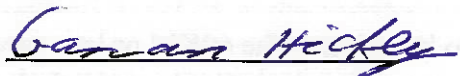
14. Any Other Business

There being no other business, Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Tommy Cullen concluded the meeting.

Signed:


CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed:


DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated:

25/03/2019