

Matter arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Tidy Towns and Public Realm

The Chairperson proposed a massive vote of congratulations to Jason Mulhall on his winning of the Supervalu Tidy Towns Community Hero award for 2019. It is a well deserved recognition at a national level of the hard work and dedication Jason has put into the tidy towns. It was also noted that Jason had helped Lacken Tidy Towns to get established.

Jason noted that the Supervalu Tidy Towns results were good for him personally and for the group. He was delighted to win the Supervalu Tidy Towns Community Hero award for 2019. He noted that when the project kicked off in 2012 Blessington got less than 200 points and this year it got 301 points which is twelve points higher than 2018. The aim is to get a bronze medal in 2020. Jason noted that the Tidy Towns was now about more than just litter and incorporated a lot of factors including public realm, biodiversity, climate action and air quality. It will require a coordinated approach and contribution from different stakeholders. The Tidy Towns group are working on a number of different initiatives including an access audit. Jason noted that the report had highlighted that Blessington was choked by traffic due to the N81 and this was going to be a difficult issue to resolve. He also noted areas of concern such as the Town Twinning expressing that there was a lack of consultation on the initiative and a lack of consultation on putting up the sign and a number of people have expressed concern over it.

Cllr. O'Neill informed the meeting that he was part of the Twinning Committee and that the twinning had been discussed at three meetings of Blessington and District Forum. It had also been discussed at the County Council Protocol committee and a number of Municipal District meetings and process had been done correctly. It had also been discussed with the secondary school.

Liam Fay pointed out that there are two community pillars in the town the Blessington and District Forum and the Tidy Towns. There had been no agreement with the Forum, presentations had been given but there was no agreement. Liam noted that from the Forum's viewpoint there was a lack of consultation. Tidy Towns and Forum were not consulted and were not told the twinning was going ahead. Town Team is supposed to be consultative group.

Cllr. O'Neill noted that it was discussed at the three meetings of the forum. There was a discussion on the grammar on the sign.

District Manager Sean Quirke informed the meeting that Blessington is not officially twinned with anywhere. At the June meeting it was agreed Baltinglass Municipal District supports the efforts of twinning the town of Blessington with O'Neill City in Nebraska and wished them well in their efforts.

Cllr. Glennon noted that at the meeting all members had wished the twinning well and responsibility for the official twinning rested with the elected members. He also noted that in this instance there may have been a deficit in consultation.

Planning & Infrastructure Group

Cllr. O'Neill noted that he had proposed the establishment of a group of three Councillors and three members of the Town Team to discuss planning and infrastructure projects. Cllr. O'Neill to link in with the Chairperson to establish group.

Simon Murphy updated the meeting on progress to date and informed members that a provisional date of 21st October was set for the next Business Network meeting. This meeting would cover Health Check Phase 2, follow up from Kaleidoscope, consultation on the County Development Plan.

John Horan suggested that it would be an ideal time for the Business Network to meet with Future Analytics and undertake the business part of the stakeholder consultation.

Tourism

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. Frank Curran, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council to the meeting and informed members that there had been a Wicklow Tourism Alliance meeting just before this meeting. Frank Curran updated the meeting on the Blessington Greenway. Consultants have been appointed to do a detailed design and full topographical survey of the project. AECOM are the consultants appointed to undertake the detailed costings and design. It is expected that the detailed designs will be completed by the end of September 2020 with a projected completion date for the project of December 2021.

There were a number of questions regarding funding for the project and Frank Curran informed the meeting that €5 million had been secured for the project, a further €5 million had been applied for under the Rural Regeneration scheme, twenty percent would come from match funding. Frank Curran noted that it was the plan to design out the full project.

Culture & Heritage

The Chairperson informed the meeting that apologies had been received from Michael Doyle. Members were informed that the Dame Ninette de Valois festival will take place over the summer 2020.

Healthy Blessington.

Killian McGreal updated the meeting on Healthy Blessington and advised that following a meeting with Wicklow Local Sports Partnership it had been agreed to offer a number of €500 bursaries for sporting and healthy activities.

Kieran Burke informed the meeting that he had met with the nutritionist employed by McGreals and she would be providing advice to students. McGreals had also kindly offered an eye screening test to all students.

Community Swimming Pool Presentation

Deirdre McCormack and Marian McNally gave a detailed and informative presentation on the campaign for a swimming pool in West Wicklow. The campaign for the swimming pool started in July 2018. Baltinglass MD is only MD without a Swimming Pool and a voluntary committee was formed. There have been meetings with elected representatives and a fundraising committee was established recently. Meetings have also taken place with Irish Water Safety. The target is to raise one million euro over two years. They also outlined the reasons for a swimming in Blessington which included the following;

- Swimming is part of the curriculum
- Good for physical and mental health
- Water safety
- Education – swimming is a life skill
- Local economic benefits

The committee have approached all the schools to get them on board and on the 17th November there is a non uniform school day which is a fundraiser for the swimming pool. Support has been received from local businesses and from Irish Water Safety.

Leo Mahon, Kildare/West Wicklow WSI Chairperson, outlined Irish Water Safety support for the project and the background to Irish Water Safety. At present most water safety training occurs in pools and in Poulaphouca reservoir. Leo outlined that 62 percent of drownings occur inland on rivers and lakes and on average over the last ten years there has been 130 drownings per annum.

Water Safety Ireland (WSI) is the statutory body charged with the provision of water safety advice and swimming, water safety and lifesaving training in Ireland. On a national level over 50,000 people receive water safety training annually. At a local level WSI provides swimming, water safety & lifesaving training on a voluntary basis to over 200 people on a weekly basis in Kildare and West Wicklow. The winter program is pool based. WSI currently operate in pools in Naas, Celbridge and on the Curragh. During the Summer months WSI provides outdoor water safety and lifesaving sports training twice weekly at Blessington Lakes. WSI is currently operating on a site leased & licensed from the ESB at Baltyboys, adjacent to the Blessington Sailing Club.

Deirdre concluded the presentation by outlining the next steps for the committee. There were a number of questions in relation to site location, fundraising and size of the pool. Deirdre outlined that the proposal was for the development of a twenty five meter pool with a learning pool, a site has not yet been identified though a site alongside the lake would be ideal.

Cllr. O'Neill outlined that the Swimming Pool committee should make a submission to the consultation on the development of the County Development Plan. Sean Quirke inquired from Leo if WSI would be willing to invest in a co-located facility and that a site close to the lake would bring its own issues and would have to be environmentally assessed. Frank Curran pointed out that the proximity to town has an impact on usage figures; swimming pools close to the town tend to attract customers from the town.

Killian McGreal enquired if any consideration has been given to how the facility would be managed. Deirdre outlined that the proposal would be for the swimming pool and associated leisure facility to be managed by a private company similar to the model employed by Shoreline in Bray and Greystones.

John Horan noted that having an associated leisure facility would help with the viability of the swimming pool. Cllr. Mullen suggested that maybe the design of the Greenway could take into account the requirements of the pool. Frank Curran informed members that the feasibility study was very comprehensive and has gone in for stream one funding. If this funding is secured the next step will be selecting the site and detailed design of the project. Deirdre informed members that once a site for the pool has been selected a "buy a brick" campaign will be launched and in the meantime there will be a number of fundraising events.

The Chairperson thanked the Swimming Pool Committee for their detailed presentation and wished them all the best with the project.

Town Health Check – Phase 2.

Chairperson John Horan outlined the Health Check Phase 2 which is to provide a blueprint for development of the town and build on the work done in Phase 1. The project had gone out to tender and Future Analytics were successful with their tender. The Chairperson welcomed James Chilton and Robert Farrell from Future Analytics to the meeting. James and Robert outlined what is envisaged in the health check and the different stages involved. These include business survey, community/public consultation, online survey and SWOT analysis. It was noted that a lot of good work had already been done on the physical environment of the town in the Phase 1 health check.

The Chairperson confirmed that arrangements had been made for the Public Consultation meeting to take place in The Avon on Tuesday 12th November from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. The consultation phase would be concluded by the end of November. It is hoped the online survey will help give a good snapshot of issues in the town.

Members were asked to identify and raise issues which they saw facing Blessington and these were documented by Future Analytics. Members noted that it was important that when projects are identified that a lead agency is also identified in order to ensure projects and tasks are progressed.

Any Other Business

There was no other business.

This concluded the business of the meeting and the next meeting is scheduled for 12th November at 5.00 p.m.

Signed:  _____
Chairman

