

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in the Blessington Civic Offices, Blessington on 18th November 2019, at 10.30 a.m.

Present: Cathaoirleach Gerry O’Neill
Councillor Vincent Blake
Councillor Patsy Glennon
Councillor Avril Cronin
Councillor John Mullen
Councillor Edward Timmins

In Attendance: Mr. Sean Quirke, District Manager
Mr. Dermot Graham, A/Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. Pat Byrne, Executive Engineer
Mr. Garvan Hickey, District Administrator
Ms. Andrea Connolly, A/Assistant Staff Officer
Ms Lisa Patton

Cllr. O’Neill opened the Baltinglass Municipal District meeting and apologised for meeting running a little late as the Baltinglass Policing Plan Committee (PPC) meeting which was held beforehand and ran over a little.

1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 21st October 2019.

Cllr. Mullen proposed the confirmation of the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 21st October 2019 and this was seconded by Cllr. Cronin.

2. To confirm and sign minutes of the Budget Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 21st October 2019.

Cllr. Blake proposed the confirmation of the minutes of the Budget Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 21st October 2019 and this was seconded by Cllr. Mullen.

3. Matters Arising

Cllr. Cronin asked if progress had been made on some of the issues that had been raised by the Dunlavin and District Forum at the previous meeting, the matter of surface water gathering on the Main Street and the lights on Church Hill. Mr. Garvan Hickey, District Administrator, advised that the drains outside Garrett's Pub had been cleared and Mr. Pat Byrne, Executive Engineer, advised that a speed survey was to be completed in area and that pedestrian signs will be erected on Sparrow Road. The public lights have been reported but Airtricity have not sent an engineer out yet.

Cllr. Blake had raised the issue of public lights in Carnew being out at the previous meeting. These lights had been reported but have still not been fixed by Airtricity and Cllr. Blake noted that this delay is undermining the commitment given to have them repaired. Mr. Graham, A/Senior Executive Engineer, advised that he was awaiting Airtricity to connect the mains to the fusebox. He also explained that a connection agreement was applied for in Deerpark, Baltinglass a number of months ago but had only just received this week and is trying to get the lights connected as soon as possible. Cllr. O'Neill noted that public lighting seems to be an ongoing issue in the district and questioned why it takes so long for faulty lights to be looked at. Mr. Graham stated that there is an issue with the supply of the old style bulbs as only one factory is still manufacturing them and this is causing a delay. Cllr. Blake noted that another explanation for the delay is that Airtricity were finding it difficult to retain staff once they were trained. Mr. Quirke, District Manager, advised members that if it is an network issue then the Council deal with the ESB, but for faulty lights and bulbs the existing contract is with SSE Airtricity, this is not due to go to tender again for approximately another five years. Mr. Quirke also advised that this is the prime time for complaints regarding public lights. Nationally the move is towards LED lights and there is a timeframe in place for the replacement of the standard lights with LED lights. Cllr. Mullen queried if staff were being moved of repairs to LED replacement and noted that public lighting was going to remain an issue on the agenda as repairs seem to have ground to a halt.

4. Correspondence

Mr. Garvan Hickey informed the members that he had received correspondence from Blessington Allotment Committee regarding a site for the allotments. He advised members that a site of 4.4 acres has been identified close to the N81 with a price of approx. €185,000. Details of the property are available from the office. Cllr. O'Neill informed members that he had been in contact with the Chief Executive regarding the development of a site at the council lands in Burgage for community allotments. Mr. Garvan Hickey advised members that as discussed previously the land at Burgage could not be considered until a master plan for the site was developed, priority was given to providing housing on the land. Mr. Hickey informed members that he had been in contact with the Housing Section regarding a site at Carrig Glen and they were supportive in principle and is to walk the site with Mr. Declan Marnane. If the Housing section is willing to give over some of the site for the development of community allotments to Baltinglass MD, it will be necessary to engage in community consultation in the area and design a plan for the allotments. Cllr. O'Neill noted that residents in Carrig Glen may be unhappy with the extra traffic caused by allotment users.

The District Administrator also advised members that he had received correspondence from Tearmann Gardens requesting permission to erect three main signs on the approach roads to Baltinglass. Cllr. O'Neill asked if they could be included with the new signs for Baltinglass but Mr. Graham advised that they are directional signs and there is a planning process to go through when erecting signs. Cllr. Cronin enquired if this procedure can be passed on to the members. Cllr. Timmins proposed that the erection of the information signs should be included as part of the development of the centre of Baltinglass as there was also a requirement for signs for the ringforts. This was agreed by members.

Mr. Hickey also advised members that correspondence was also received from Blessington Historical Society regarding the removal of the granite structure on approach to Blessington and an email from Ms. Anne Halpin from Hollywood Forum with regard to the bus stops at Hollywood.

Cllr. Glennon proposed introducing the reduction of speed limits at Hollywood Cross and suggested a speed limit of 80km. Cllr. Timmins concurred with Cllr. Glennon and questioned if this could be done. Mr. Sean Quirke, District Manager, advised that any change on the national route has to be sanctioned through TII. Cllr. Glennon proposed requesting this change from 100km to 80km from the enter Co. Wicklow sign to Sean Behan's on the Baltinglass side of Hollywood cross. Cllr. Timmins seconded this motion.

Cllr. O'Neill noted that the correspondence from Hollywood Forum would be discussed under item 8 on the agenda.

5. To receive a presentation from Ms. Lisa Patton on addiction services

The Cathaoirleach introduced Ms. Patton and welcomed her to the meeting. He explained that Ms. Patton as well as working with the Department of Social Protection deals with a lot of addiction issues locally and commended the time and effort she puts into this.

Ms. Lisa Patton presented the members with a detailed report on the services that are available to young people with addictions in West Wicklow. She explained that cocaine use is widespread in the Blessington area and patients presenting at the clinic she runs are getting younger. She stressed the importance of introducing a drug awareness programme in primary schools to make children more aware of the dangers of drug use. She also advised that parents need to be educated on the dangers of drug use and the mental health issues associated with them.

Following the presentation the members thanked Ms. Patton for her presentation and there were a number of comments from members.

Cllr. Timmins asked if at present there were any educational plans in primary school. Ms. Patton advised that there are no programmes in place at the moment but this is something that needs to be looked at. After some discussion Cllr. Timmins proposed bringing a motion to Wicklow County Council to implement an educational programme to primary schools. All members were in agreement of this. The following motion: "That the HSE immediately

establish an age appropriate drugs awareness programme in all schools nationwide". This motion was proposed by Cllr. Timmins and seconded by Cllr. Cronin.

6. To follow up on the special meeting of the 15th November 2019 on the condition of the N81 and the need to upgrade the 31 kilometres of the road.

Cllr. Cronin advised members that a plan of action needs to be put in place following the special meeting. She added that there were a lot of views and opinions aired but there was no conclusion or follow up. Cllr. Cronin proposed writing to Minister Eoghan Murphy requesting a review of the decision from EMRA to exclude the N81 upgrade, getting the support of EMRA members for the inclusion of the N81 and writing to Minister Shane Ross to seek a meeting to discuss the need for the upgrade of the N81 and present the case for the upgrade. Cllr. Mullen agreed with Cllr. Cronin and stressed that these three requests need to be made. Cllr. Timmins suggested writing to South County Dublin Council and Kildare County Council also to get their support. Mr. Quirke advised members that no detailed design has been completed for the upgrade of N81 and noted that this was a medium to long term objective. Mr. Quirke added that works between Tallaght and Hollywood can be done if the resources become available but there are severe constraints on what can be done at the moment. Mr. Quirke also proposed that members should also consider more short term and medium term projects which could alleviate some of the issues on the N81, these include the completion of the inner relief road in Blessington to take some traffic out of the town and the development of a stacking lane for traffic turning right on to Oak Drive. Mr. Quirke also added that the that the EMRA strategy was only adopted on the 28th June 2019 year and to ask for a review already on this decision may not looked upon favourably and he was not aware of any mechanism to trigger a review. Mr. Hickey informed members that prior to the Ministerial approval for the EMRA Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 – 2031 letters had been sent to Minister Murphy asking him to include the N81 and the link from Baltinglass and Dunlavin to the M9 in the strategy. The letter was acknowledged on the 10th June 2019 and the N81 upgrade was not included in the strategy.

Cllr. Blake noted that we have focus on getting short term improvement works as well as focusing on getting the upgrade completed. Cllr. Timmins noted that a three prong approach was required for the three main issues that needed pursuing, the N81 upgrade, Inner Relief Road completion and improvement works on the N81

Cllr. Glennon proposed writing to Minister Eoghan Murphy, Minister Shane Ross, the Taoiseach and both South County Dublin and Kildare County Councils asking for support on getting the upgrade of the N81 back on the agenda. This motion was seconded by Cllr. Timmins.

The Cathaoirleach Cllr. O'Neill concluded the discussion noting the N81 would be on the agenda for future meeting and members would persevere trying to get the road upgraded.

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

Mr. Dermot Graham, A/Senior Executive Engineer, presented a report to the meeting on non national and national roads and copies of same were distributed to the members. He advised members that all road improvement works in Blessington are complete with the exception of Pavement Works at Kiltel Junction to Blessington which are ongoing and should be completed within a week.

He also updated members on two road improvement projects which are ongoing at present on Kevin Street, Tinahely and on the Aughrim Road, Tinahely. Mr. Graham advised members that there were very little outstanding works on the non national roads report, bridge works were almost complete and there were further footpath works due to commence in Westpark, Lakeside Downs, Main Street Blessington, Stratford and Mallenswood towards the end of month.

Cllr. Mullen advised that Local Business Committee had been enquiring if the re-surfacing works on the Main Street in Tinahely could be started at the parochial hall. Mr. Graham advised that drainage works were ongoing at present and should be completed by the end of the month. Cllr. Mullen also noted that the Croneyhorn to Carnew footpath needs clearing.

Cllr. Cronin advised that a number of tenants from a housing estate in Dunlavin have requested if a footpath from estate to football field can be constructed as footpath has not been completed. Mr. Byrne, Executive Engineer, advised that the building contractor involved went bankrupt and Wicklow County Council will have to put footpaths in place but

funding could be an issue. He questioned if discretionary funding could be used. Cllr. Cronin to submit details of works required to Mr. Graham.

8. To discuss installation of bus shelter at Hollywood Cross and development of footpath

The District Administrator, Mr. Hickey, advised members that there was a danger of losing funding of €27,000 from the department for the installation of a bus shelter and footpaths at Hollywood Cross if the project is not concluded by the end of the year. He continued that an extension could be asked for but funding is not adequate for the works proposed. A new funding application could be submitted in 2020 to secure the required funding for the project. Mr. Pat Byrne suggested grouping the bus shelter and footpath works together and securing funding for both. He advised that in order to progress with this project approval from landowners must be sought and TII must also be in agreement. He noted that he has met with the landowner and negotiations are in place.

9. To consider the distribution of funding to interested groups of Christmas Lights Funding

Mr. Garvan Hickey, District Administrator, distributed a report on the allocation of Christmas Lights & Festival Funding 2019 for the member's consideration. He advised that total funding for the Christmas Lights was €10,000 but suggested €2,000 from the Civic Reception Funds and a balance of €500 from Estate Development Fund to cover all applications received. Cllr. O'Neill noted that one group, Valleymount Theatre Company, had not been allocated funding. Mr. Hickey explained that this group had requested funding for a snow machine. Cllr. Glennon proposed allocating €800 to Valleymount & Ballyknockan and €200 to Valleymount Theatre Co. instead of €1,000 to Valleymount & Ballyknockan. Cllr. Timmins seconded this motion. Cllr. Mullen proposed the allocation of Christmas Light & Festival Funding 2019 and Cllr. Cronin seconded this. Funding to be allocated by means of electronic funds transfer.

8. To discuss the Discretionary Fund 2020

Mr. Garvan Hickey, District Administrator, advised members that in the Draft Wicklow County Council Budget 2020 €180,750 has been allocated to the Baltinglass Municipal District Discretionary Fund 2020 budget, which divided equally would be an allocation of €30,125 for each member. He also advised that €93,750 has been allocated to the IPB Footpath Repair Baltinglass MD. Mr. Hickey noted that these figures are approximate and will be adopted at the Budget meeting on Monday 25th November. Cllr. Blake questioned if the IPB Footpath budget is divided equally between Blessington and Tinahely areas and Mr. Graham confirmed this. Mr. Hickey advised that a list of work projects be submitted from each member. Cllr. Mullen asked what type of projects can be funded through the Discretionary Fund and Mr. Graham stated that footpaths, public lighting and any improvements to public areas could be funded. Mr. Quirke added that larger projects that make an impact would be more suitable than a number of smaller projects. It was agreed that members would consider projects for 2020 and the item could be discussed at the December meeting following the adoption of the 2020 Budget.

11. To discuss Blessington Town twinning with O'Neill, Nebraska

There was a detailed discussion on the twinning of Blessington Town with O'Neill County, Nebraska. Cllr. Timmins raised concerns over the issue of funds being spent without getting public approval. Cllr. Timmins stressed the importance of getting the support of the community for the town twinning. Cllr. Cronin noted that a number of requests had been received regarding the town twinning prior to the last meeting and it was imperative that these be dealt with rather than dismissed. Cllr. Blake agreed with both councillors and stressed that it was his belief that Baltinglass Municipal District supported the community town twinning but at all times, the Municipal District was not to be officially involved.

Cllr. O'Neill read extracts of minutes of Baltinglass Municipal District meeting referencing the town twinning and the acceptance of the members of this project. He advised members that it was the same few people that had written the letters raising concerns over the twinning and is of the belief that there was intimidation involved when the twinning sign was being erected by council staff. Cllr. Mullen noted that three groups have corresponded on this

matter with an issue over the consultation process and added that this project needs to progress with the people of Blessington supporting it. Cllr. Timmins expressed reservations over the twinning and raised concerns over the fact that Blessington has no connection with O'Neill County and that it is not fully supported by the community. Cllr. O'Neill questioned why Cllr. Timmins did not mention this before and Cllr. Timmins stated that he has not been on board with this all along. Cllr. Glennon wished the twinning committee well and stated that his position has not changed on this but he did suggest that reinstating the granite welcome sign may help. The Cathaoirleach agreed with Cllr. Glennon that the moving of the granite stone may not have helped matters but felt council staff should not have been intimidated.

The District Manager, Mr. Sean Quirke, advised members that no official twinning agreements were signed and the Municipal District had supported the community initiative but was not formally involved. Cllr. Timmins questioned if planning permission was required to erect the new twinning sign and if the contents of the sign are properly constituted. Mr. Quirke advised that no planning permission was required but there were concerns with the wording of the sign. Mr. Hickey responded that at the Baltinglass Municipal District meeting in July members agreed with the recommendation that Baltinglass Municipal District supports the community efforts of twinning the town of Blessington with O'Neill City in Nebraska and wished them well in their efforts. This recommendation made it clear that it was a community initiative and not a formal twinning. Mr. Hickey also advised members that Town Twinning is a reserved function of the members under section 75 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. It is a reserved function to be performed by members of the Municipal District.

Cllr. Cronin asked who had funded the sign and Mr. Hickey replied that there were no expenditure by Baltinglass MD on the sign with the exception of labour costs to erect the sign. Cllr. O'Neill invited members to a meeting of the Blessington Town Twinning Committee on Wednesday 20th November. Cllr. O'Neill asked if all members were in agreement that the community twinning is supported in principle by Baltinglass Municipal District but is not officially twinned. There were no objections to this.

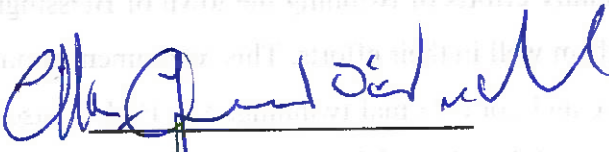
11. Any other business

The District Administrator advised members that there has been a change to the time of the next PPC meeting which will now be held after the January Baltinglass Municipal Ordinary meeting instead of beforehand.

Mr. Hickey also advised that various funding announcements had been made and these included funding of €2.67million for Baltinglass, which will be match funded by Wicklow County Council to bring the overall fund to €3.5 million for Baltinglass Town Centre under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. Wicklow County Council CCSD and Roads sections worked closely with Baltinglass and District Forum to secure the funding. Funding has also been allocated from the Sports Capital Programme to various sports clubs around the Municipal District. Under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme Dunlavin secured €20,973 and Coolkenno €24,000 in funding. Mr. Hickey noted that match funding from the Municipal District was an issue which would have to be considered by members.

There being no other business the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. O'Neill, concluded the meeting.

Signed:


CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed:


DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated:

16/12/2019.