

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in  
Germaines, Baltinglass on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020, at 11.00 a.m.**

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

**In Attendance:** Ms. Breege Kilkenny, District Manager  
Mr. Dermot Graham, A/Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. Pat Byrne, Executive Engineer  
Mr. Garvan Hickey, District Administrator  
Ms. Andrea Connolly, Assistant Staff Officer  
Mr. Fergal Keogh, Senior Engineer  
Ms. Edel Bermingham, Senior Executive Planner

Cllr. O'Neill opened the Baltinglass Municipal District meeting by welcoming all and by thanking everyone for their best wishes over the last few traumatic months. He asked all present to remember all of the people who have passed away from the Covid -19 virus. May they rest in peace.

- 1. To pass a resolution for the holding of the Ordinary Meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District in Germaines, Baltinglass at 11 am on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020 as set out in the Municipal District of Baltinglass, Standing Orders, regulating the business and proceedings of the Municipal District.**

This resolution was proposed by Cllr. Blake and seconded by Cllr. Glennon

## **2. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020.**

Cllr. Mullen proposed the confirmation of the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and this was seconded by Cllr. Blake.

## **3. Matters Arising**

Cllr. O'Neill noted that it had been agreed at the previous meeting to get legal advice regarding the issue with the maintenance of bridges, road surfaces and the responsibility of the ESB and questioned if there was any update on this matter.

District Administrator, Mr. Hickey, advised members that he had sought the advice of the Law Agent regarding the issue and outlined the advice received. Cllr. O'Neill noted that he is receiving complaints on a daily basis regarding the road surface of the bridges and added that this is a long running issue he would like to see resolved.

## **4. Correspondence**

Mr. Garvan Hickey informed members that he had received correspondence from Michael Nicholson, Director of Services CCSD, which outlined from the Local Government Management Agency that the Minister would be making three announcements in the coming week in relation to 1. Rural, 2. Town and Village, 3. Outdoor Recreation funding schemes. These schemes will have at least 3 moth deadlines and for the Town and Village there is an additional short term scheme to assist with COVID related issues, supporting social distancing etc. which will have a shorter turnaround time.

This year the Town and Village Renewal Scheme will have two elements to it with the aim to assist communities and local businesses on adapting to public health requirements, particularly social distancing during the Covid 19 pandemic. These schemes have a short deadline and applications are invited for ready to go projects.

The second piece of correspondence received was from Blessington Allotments Campaign outlining the two year anniversary of the commencement of discussions with Wicklow County Council on the provision of allotments in Blessington and the health and wellbeing benefits of providing such during the COVID19 pandemic. The letter also outlined the urgent need for an alternative site for allotments other than the site at Carrig Glen which the campaign believe is not feasible for community allotments. It also states that a plot of 3.3 acres for sale near Blessington which would meet their requirements has gone on the market recently and asks that the members assess for purchase. Copy of the correspondence was circulated to members.

Cllr. Cronin asked if there had been any updates on sites available in the Blessington area and Mr. Hickey advised that he was due to arrange a meeting with Carrig Glen Residents Association in March but due to the COVID -19 pandemic this meeting will now have to be arranged for July or August. Cllr. Glennon asked if buying the plot of 3.3 acres was an option and Mr. Hickey replied that this was not an option at the moment as no budget was available in the Municipal District. Cllr. Mullen questioned if funding could be sought through LEADER or Town and Village Renewal Scheme to cover the cost of purchasing land. Cllr. Timmins noted that the 3.3 acre site suggested by the Blessington Allotment Campaign was outside Blessington and its feasibility needed to be examined.

After some discussion, Ms. Breege Kilkenny, District Manager, suggested that Mr. Hickey pursue the option of funding from LEADER. Cllr. Glennon proposed this motion and Cllr. Timmins seconded it.

Cllr. O'Neill noted that Wicklow County Council are obliged to provide land for use as allotments in the Blessington area. He noted that this issue has been ongoing for the last three years and that residents of Carrig Glen are not happy with the proposal of allotments in their area and suggested that a one and half acre site be made available at Burgage. Cllr. Glennon agreed with Cllr. O'Neill and questioned how much land was available at Burgage for allotment use. He suggested contacting the planning department to advise on this matter and to try and move this on as soon as possible. Cllr. Mullen noted that the County Development Plan is under review but questioned at what stage Blessington Town Plan was at as all members are in favour of allotments for Blessington. Ms. Kilkenny advised members that submissions for the County Development Plan are being reviewed and all will

be taken on board. Cllr. O'Neill proposed writing to the Chief Executive to request that land at Burgage be considered as a site for allotments. This proposal was seconded by Cllr. Glennon. Cllr. Glennon noted that it was important that proper planning was pursued in the development of the lands at Burgage to ensure that all aspects were sustainable. Cllr. O'Neill also proposed adding this item to the agenda for the next meeting. It was agreed that District Administrator would write to the Director of Services for Housing to see if some of the land at Burgage would be given to the Municipal District for Community Allotments.

**5. To inform the Members on the details, including preplanning consultations and An Bord Pleanála advice notice issued with respect to, Strategic Housing Development Application on lands at Kilmalum Road, Blessington, Co. Wicklow and Co. Kildare, for the construction of 360 no. dwellings in a mix of houses, duplexes and apartment units ranging from 2 to 3 storeys, including associated car parking spaces, internal roads and paths, public and private open spaces and a crèche.**

Mr. Fergal Keogh gave a detailed presentation to members on the statutory process of Strategic Housing Development applications and outlined the application for the construction of 360 dwellings at Kilmalum Road, Blessington. He advised that part of this development exits onto the Kilmalum Road with the majority of the development situated in County Kildare. This was the first Municipal District meeting to be held since the application had been submitted and the Chief Executive will submit his report by 22<sup>nd</sup> June and An Bord Pleanála will then make their decision.

As this is the first Strategic Housing Development application in Baltinglass Municipal District Cllr. Blake asked Mr. Keogh at what level An Bord Pleanála were involved and what the Chief Executive's input has been in previous similar applications. Mr. Keogh explained that there have been several Strategic Housing Developments in the east of the county, two have been granted and one is underway. He added that An Bord Pleanála have to have regard to the Chief Executive's report and the views of members. There was a discussion on density levels in developments and the recommendations from An Bord Pleanála regarding density.

Cllr. Blake also raised the issue of the upgrade of the waste water treatment plant in Blessington. Mr. Keogh noted that there was no upgrade of the treatment plant in 2018 but Irish Water will have to upgrade to facilitate the level of development in Blessington. Cllr. Timmins raised concerns over a number of issues including zoning, development levies and social housing.

Cllr. Glennon noted that An Bord Pleanála had increased density from 200 to 360 dwellings and raised concerns over the pressure it would put on the infrastructure of Blessington town including the N81 and he noted the majority of houses would be built in Co. Kildare. Mr. Keogh explained that the main reason for increasing density was efficient use of land. He added that that An Bord Pleanála decision will take on board the views of Wicklow County Council and if they feel infrastructure is not able to cope the application will not be approved.

Ms. Edel Bermingham advised members that after the presentation any issues raised by members would be noted and included with the Chief Executive's report. She added that any member can make a submission separately but it would be as a third party. Ms. Bermingham outlined the issues raised by An Bord Pleanála in preplanning. Ms. Bermingham noted that the Chief Executive's report would have to have regard to proper planning development. Cllr. Timmins asked when the Chief Executive report is due and Mr. Keogh replied 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Cllr. Blake noted that there were differing opinions regarding the development and noted that from the opinions raised by members we as a district should insist that the ring road is completed to alleviate pressure on Blessington.

Cllr. O'Neill noted that the feeling on the ground is that the development while providing private housing in the Blessington area there are no real benefits to Wicklow or Blessington, all the social housing will be allocated to people in Kildare, there are concern over the capacity of the Irish Water plant, development levies will go to Kildare County Council and Cllr. O'Neill queried how much of the levies will be spent to develop the local area, relief road should be part of the agreement.

Following a discussion between members it was agreed the following priority issues be raised:

- Irish Water upgrade of the waste water treatment system
- Infrastructure and Inner Relief Road upgrade
  - Public transport
- Development Contribution Scheme
- Scale of development and sustainability
- Social housing

Cllr. O'Neill thanked both Mr. Keogh and Ms. Bermingham for their presentation. Cllr. Cronin asked if a third party submission would be made by the members. Both Cllr. Glennon and Cllr. Timmins agreed that due to the upgrade of the N81 not going ahead that a light public transport system also be included with submission. Ms Kilkenny, District Manager, advised members that a third party submission needs to be submitted before 2<sup>nd</sup> June and that planners, the Chief Executive and An Bord Pleanála will take individual submissions on board. Cllr. O'Neill suggested each member draft a recommendation of three or four lines each and forward to Mr. Hickey to draft a submission as a third party. This proposal was agreed by Cllr. Glennon and seconded by Cllr. Blake.

## **6. To discuss and consider Estate Development Funding Applications**

Mr. Hickey advised members that twenty applications had been received for Estate Development Grants and it was proposed to allocated €7,700 to eighteen estates across the Municipal District. The funding was being allocated based on the number of social houses in each estate. A copy of report was circulated to all members. Cllr. Glennon questioned why Downshire Park Estate in Blessington did not receive any funding and Mr. Hickey explained there were no Local Authority houses in Downshire Park or Ashton Estate in Blessington but there was a balance of €300 which if members agreed could be split between them. Cllr. Blake asked if all estates receiving funding included social housing. Cllr. Glennon proposed the allocation of funding and Cllr. Timmins seconded. Due to the current restrictions it was agreed that the funding would be transferred to the applicants by electronic transfer rather than organising an event to present cheques.

## **7. To discuss and consider Discretionary Expenditure 2020**

Mr. Garvan Hickey, District Administrator, advised members that Discretionary Expenditure needed to be finalised and adopted as the timeframe for completing projects this year was getting very tight. Mr. Hickey informed members that the total budget was €237,000 and it was agreed that it would be divided equally between members, giving each member €39,500. It was important that the projects are completed this year, it would be very hard to justify bringing forward funding into 2021. A draft of proposed discretionary projects by Councillor was circulated to members.

Cllr. Cronin queried if discretionary funding could be used for organisations like the laneway to a GAA pitch, or did it have to cover public realm projects. Mr. Dermot Graham, District Engineer, replied that only public realm projects can be considered and added that he had liaised with Cllr. Timmins, Cllr. Blake and Cllr. Mullen and they had agreed on projects for the discretionary expenditure. Cllr. Cronin asked if Discretionary Funding can be amended and signed off at next meeting. Ms. Kilkenny advised that Baltinglass Municipal District is the only district where the discretionary budget is divided up for each member and if not approved there is a risk of repercussions due to the COVID19 pandemic and the resultant budgetary pressures. Cllr. Glennon queried if the list of projects could be amended in the future if a particular project did not go ahead. Mr. Hickey informed members that there is a certain amount of flexibility and that amendments can be made in the future if necessary but that it was important that the Municipal District had a definitive list of public realm projects which could be delivered this year. In previous years due to circumstances outside the power of the members and the Municipal District projects did not go ahead and this necessitated bringing forward funding. Mr. Hickey advised that as members wanted to make amendments to the list of proposed projects the item could be brought to the next Baltinglass Municipal District meeting in June for adoption by members. This was proposed by Cllr. O'Neill and seconded by Cllr. Glennon.

## **8. To consider Roads Reports (national and non-national roads)**

All members agreed to defer this item until the next meeting in June as meeting needed to be concluded within two hours in line with COVID19 control measures. Mr. Graham, District

Engineer, advised members that all road projects are out to tender at present and all Road Improvement and Maintenance works for 2020 will go ahead as scheduled. Copies of the roads reports national and non – national were included in members packs.

**9. To pass a resolution for the holding of the Annual Meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District in Germaines, Baltinglass at 10.30am on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 as set out in the Municipal District of Baltinglass, Standing Orders, regulating the business and proceedings of the Municipal District.**

Cllr. O'Neill suggested the Annual meeting be held St. Kevin's Community Hall in Blessington or some other venue in Blessington. Mr. Hickey advised that the resolution could be amended to read to pass a resolution for the holding of the Annual Meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District and Ordinary Meeting at 10.30am on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 at a venue to be decided by the Cathaoirleach as set out in the Municipal District of Baltinglass, Standing Orders, regulating the business and proceedings of the Municipal District. This resolution was proposed by Cllr. Blake and seconded by Cllr. Mullen. Cllr. Blake noted that it was important for members to be informed of the venue for the Annual Meeting well before the meeting. Mr. Hickey to e mail member's venue for the meeting.

**10. Any other business**

Cllr. Blake offered condolences to former member of staff of Wicklow County Council, James Wilson, on the death of his wife Margaret. Cllr. Timmins also extended sympathies to former MEP Allan Gillis on the death of his wife Irene. May they rest in peace.

Cllr. Mullen thanked all for coming to meeting today and thanked council management and staff for their work during the recent few weeks. Cllr. Timmins extended thanks to Germaines for use of the venue for the meeting and ensuring social distancing.

Cllr. Glennon and all members welcomed the Cathaoirleach back and extended their best wishes for a speedy recovery to good health.

Mr. Hickey wished to acknowledge the hard work in recent times of all community groups and local businesses in assisting the vulnerable during the COVID19 crisis and the community spirit shown across the Municipal District.

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

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CATHAOIRLEACH**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR**

**Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DRAFT**