

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in the Blessington Civic Offices, Blessington on 27th March 2023 at 10.30am

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

In Attendance: Ms. Breege Kilkenny, District Manager
Mr. Pat Byrne, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer
Mr. Liam Cullen, District Administrator
Ms. Aideen Russell, Assistant Staff Officer

Community Pool for West Wicklow Committee

Ms. Deirdre McCormack, Chairperson
Mr. Ashley Hunter, Head of Participation Swim Ireland
Ms. Mary McMorrow, Director of Operations – Swim Ireland (Via Zoom)

Cathaoirleach John Mullen opened the March meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District and requested that item four on the Agenda be brought forward to item two. Elected Members agreed and the meeting commenced with the presentation on the Pop-Up Pool project and development of a permanent pool for West Wicklow.

Votes of Sympathy

The members expressed a vote of sympathy to Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Tommy Annesley and his family on the death of their brother Dudley.

Also, a vote of sympathy to the families of Mr. James (Shamie) Clarke of Hollywood and Mr. Paddy Ryall of Blessington.

A minutes silence was observed.

1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 27th February 2023.

It was proposed by Cllr. Blake, seconded by Cllr. Cronin and unanimously agreed to confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 27th February 2023.

2. To receive a presentation from West Wicklow Pool Campaign

Ms. Deirdre McCormack, Chairperson of the Community Pool for West Wicklow Committee made a presentation to the members regarding the Pop-Up Pool project and the next steps towards developing a permanent pool for West Wicklow.

Topics presented were:

- The Diverse Community Use of the Pop up Pool
- Pool Usage from Sept. to Dec. 2022 – Total Swims over 12 Weeks – 7,449
- Community Reaction
- Feasibility Study WCC Capital Plan 2021
- Future LSSIF Applications
- Priority Project
- Why Swimming
- Policy Context
 - National Physical Activity Plan
 - National Sports Policy
 - National Swimming Strategy
- Swim Ireland Report on Swimming Pool Evolution & Innovations
- Facts & Features.

Ms. Mary McMorro, Director of Operations – Swim Ireland also addressed the importance of learning to swim and the biggest problem communities are facing for learning this life skill, no access.

Ms. McCormack agreed to forward further details on the following via email following the meeting:

- Pools Report Rainham Case Study
- Pools Report Dukries Newark Case Study
- Pools Report Swim Box Floor Plans – Estimates 2022
- Swim Irelands Pools Report

Questions & Answers

- Cllr. Timmins had some questions regarding the number of participants of the pop up pool given in the presentation by Ms. McCormack, more detailed figures were then given by Ms McCormack for the period the pop up pool was in place in Blessington. He also had concerns regarding the rankings received in the 2019 Funding Application. Ms McCormack assured Cllr. Timmins that they have addressed the low rankings received. It was felt by having the pop-up-pool figures and licence agreements in place regarding usage of the pool, it is anticipated that future Funding Applications will be successful.

- Cllr. Glennon questioned if the number of people using the pool was disappointing and queried the reason for the delayed opening of the pool. Ms. McCormack said that the pool opening was delayed as a full planning application was needed and that due to Staffing issues, (there is a National Shortage of Swimming Trainers and Lifeguards), the pool was oversubscribed and they found they had to turn people away. Ms McCormack did not think the figures were disappointing for the amount of time the pool was open and staffed.
 - Ms. Kilkenny addressed the delay due to the requirement of planning and it was agreed by Ms. McCormack that the planning process had a quick turn around and appreciated the support they received from Wicklow County Council's Planning Department.
- Cllr. O'Neill has concerns that after all the hard work, over many years, a swimming pool may not be a reality. He also asked for the reason as to why the pool had to close for a period of time after its opening. Ms. McCormack responded that they believe the pool will happen and that a technical issue was the reason for the closure. Cllr. O'Neill was assured that refunds were given to anyone who missed lessons due to the closure. Cllr. O'Neill stated that he would like to see the Town Plan progressed where lands could be proposed for the pool.
- Cllr. Blake commented that a stand-alone facility would not be suitable. Ms McCormack stated that the case studies similar to their plans, which will be forwarded to all Elected Members following the meeting, will show that the proposal is not a stand-alone facility and can be adapted to suit the needs of the area.
- Cllr. Mullen thanked Ms. McCormack and Ms. McMorrow for their presentation and continued hard work and hopes for the best result for all involved as soon as possible.

3. Matters Arising

Following a query at the February Municipal District meeting Mr. Cullen advised that the current lease on the building occupied by Blessington Men's shed is now due for renewal. Blessington District Forum has indicated that they will no longer act as a third party in securing a lease for the building. However, Blessington Men's Shed is interested in dealing with the council directly with regards to taking on the lease agreement.

4. Baltinglass RRDF

- Mr Cullen informed the members that Baltinglass Municipal had been awarded €420,000 from the recently announced community recognition fund which was set up to reward communities for the welcoming of Ukrainian refugees into their towns and villages, this funding is to be allocated to stage two of the redevelopment of Baltinglass Town Park. The members welcomed the funding and thanked the officials for their work in securing this funding for Baltinglass Municipal District

- Mr. Cullen informed Elected Members that the Department have requested further information on the extra 2 million funding application. He also advised that Wicklow County Council is reengaging with consultants regarding the original funding so that Phase 1 and works on the Court House can progress.
- Mr. Byrne substantiated the importance of using the funding already in place to proceed with works on the Town Centre.
We are awaiting a review of current options report on the Bridge and Mr. Conor Page will be invited to address The Members at a future meeting regarding same.
Future bridge funding will be progressed under an active travel scheme not RRDF funding.
- Mr. Graham informed the members that work on the park is progressing well. Everyone present complemented the progress achieved and works carried out to date.
- Mr. Graham discussed funding received towards the development of new and existing amenities in Baltinglass Town Park.
The €425,000 grant will fund the long-awaited extension of the Riverside Walk around the park and the construction of a plaza area, along with a new playground and state of the art multi-sport unit that encourages physical exercise 365 days a year.
- Cllr. Glennon requested that the RRDF remain at the top of The Agenda and thanked Mr. Byrne, Mr. Graham & Mr. Cullen for all their hard work. He welcomed the extra funding and requested that the Members be informed of the outcome of the scheduled meeting on the 29th March 2023 regarding tender timelines etc.
- Ms. Kilkenny stated that she will keep putting pressure on the Department for a decision on the funding application.
- Cllr. Timmins questioned if the specification of works to be carried out in Phase 1 on the Town Centre would be changed. He was informed by Mr. Byrne that the specification will be reviewed which should give a more realistic account of the works which could be carried out for the monies available.
- Cllr. Timmins suggested that a committee be formed with all appropriate stakeholders, who will meet weekly / fortnightly to support this project moving forward. Mr. Cullen will invite a representative from Roads and CCSD to the next meeting to discuss this suggestion further.
- Cllr. Glennon suggested the appointment of an Engineer to oversee the RRDF specifically.
- Cllr. Blake stated that it is a health and safety issue now with the bridge in Baltinglass and a solution needs to be found to make the bridge safe for pedestrians and motorists

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

The District Engineers updated the members on the Baltinglass MD national and non-national roads reports, both of which were circulated to the members prior to the meeting.

The members were informed that a meeting will be held on the 29th March 2023 with stakeholders of the N81 to discuss a collaborative approach to achieving improvements needed for all travelling this road.

Members Comments and Observations:

- Cllr. Glennon commented on pedestrian safety. Mentioning especially lighting at Annalecky and the overgrown trees covering public lights in Manor Kilbride.
- Cllr. Timmins asked when the old legal speed limit signs would be replaced. Mr. Byrne informed the members that signage reflecting the new legal speed limits should be in place by the end of June 2023, approximately.
- Cllr. O'Neill enquired about the proposed bus shelter at Lamb Cross and Mr. Byrne ensured him he is continuously working to progress this project and will have the bus shelter installed ASAP.
- A discussion was held regarding the condition of roads, potholes and the state in which Irish Water contractors had left certain roads after carrying out works. The Members were assured by The Engineers that our General Operatives are out continually carrying out road repairs but that the bad weather has impeded their progress. The recent improvement in weather should make a big difference. The issue with Irish Water is in hand and will be dealt with accordingly. The members were advised that there is an agreement in place that all roads are re-instated to a specified standard and that a bond is in place – financial penalties – if they do not meet this standard.

6. To consider the allocation of Baltinglass Municipal District Estate Development Grants

It was unanimously agreed to accept the proposed allocations for the Baltinglass Municipal District Estate Development Grants, which was then proposed by Cllr. Blake and seconded by Cllr. Glennon.

- Cllr. Glennon thanked Mr. Cullen for all his work on the grant allocations and stated that it had been fairly distributed.

7. Correspondence

- Mr. Cullen informed The Members that correspondence was received from Ms. Eleanor Lee in which she thanked the members for their continued support for the Twinning project between Coolattin and Smith Falls, Canada.
- Correspondence was received from Barry Hamilton, a member of the Blessington musical group committee, who are planning to stage West Side Story Musical, to be held on the 20th/21st May. In the email Mr. Hamilton requested council funding to support the event. It was proposed by Cllr. O'Neill, seconded by Cllr. Glennon to allocate €250 toward the running of the event, the proposal was unanimously agreed by all members.

Cllr. Timmins stated that while he agreed to this funding, all monies should be allocated through the proper processes and receipts should be requested to show where all monies are spent. A discussion was held and Ms. Kilkenny agreed that she welcomed the idea of receipts being requested to allow for proper governance.

- Mr. Cullen also received correspondence from representatives from Castle Maggiore, proposing a date for their visit to Blessington between the 18th & 22nd July 2023. The Members agreed that they should be welcomed which was then proposed by Cllr. Timmins and seconded by Cllr. Blake.

7. Any other business

- The Members were asked by Mr. Cullen to think about their nominees for the Awards Night previously discussed. Long Service Awards for Fire Service Retirees was also discussed and agreed that acknowledgement must be given.
- Cllr. Cronin enquired about Building Enhancement – Street Scape programmes and was informed by Mr. Cullen that CCSD look after this funding.
- Cllr. O'Neill expressed his concerns regarding housing issues relating to evictions and the lack of response received to emails sent and phone calls made to the housing department.
- Cllr. Blake wished to acknowledge the achievements of Oscar Cawley and George Hadden, both residents of Baltinglass Municipal District, who were part of the Irish Under 20s Ruby Team, winners of the 2023 Grand Slam.
- Cllr. Timmins congratulated Grangecon Kitchen for being included in the Sunday Times top 100 restaurants in Ireland for 2023. They were also mentioned in the top 10 in Ireland for lunch and top 8 for bread.

8. Date of next meeting

The next Baltinglass Municipal District meeting will be held on the 24th April 2023, in Coláiste Bhríde, Main St, Carnew, Co. Wicklow. Y14 WA00

There being no other business, Cllr. Mullen, concluded the meeting.

Signed: _____

CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed: _____

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated: _____