

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in Blessington Civic Offices on 25th March 2024 at 10.30am

Present: Cathaoirleach Edward Timmins
Councillor Vincent Blake
Councillor Avril Cronin
Councillor Gerry O'Neill
Councillor Patsy Glennon
Councillor John Mullen (Via Zoom)

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

Housing & Corporate Est. - Housing - Construction

Ms. Helena Fallon, Senior Executive Engineer
Ms. Aideen Klauer, Executive Engineer

Transportation, Infrastructure Delivery & Emergency Services

Mr. John Bowes, Senior Engineer
Mr. Brendan Doyle, Senior Executive Engineer

Transport Infrastructure Ireland & Kildare National Roads Office

Mr. John Ahern

Cathaoirleach Edward Timmins opened the March meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District and welcomed all present.

He, on behalf of all The Members thanked Denise Smith for her years of service to Baltinglass Municipal District and wished her all the best with her promotion and new role in her native Carlow.

1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 26th February 2024.

It was proposed by Cllr. Cronin, seconded by Cllr. Blake and unanimously agreed to confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 26th February 2024.

2. Matters Arising

Mr. Cullen informed The Members that he had received an email from Minister O’Gorman’s office acknowledging the letter which was sent, on their behalf, regarding an update on the operations status of Kilbride Army Camp. He awaits a further response.

Mr. Cullen also informed the Members that a letter was sent, on their behalf as requested, to Mr. Pat Neville at Coillte’s Head Office regarding the Lithium Exploration Project in southwest Wicklow and Carlow but to date had not received an acknowledgment or response.

3. To receive a presentation: Briefing on the proposed age and disability housing scheme at Mountain View / Troopersfield, Blessington.

Ms. Klauer and Ms. Fallon gave a presentation to The Members on the proposed age and disability housing scheme at Mountain View / Troopersfield, Blessington. They agreed to forward the presentation to all The Members.

Questions & Answers:

- Cllr. Cronin thanked Ms. Klauer and Ms. Fallon for their presentation, stating that she had discussed the needs of KARE in a meeting with them recently. This scheme would be of huge benefit to them and stressed the importance of discussing KARE’s specific needs to ensure they are met. Cllr. Cronin stated that this scheme is a positive step for the District and more, similar schemes are needed in West Wicklow.
- Cllr. O’Neill thanked Ms. Klauer and Ms. Fallon for their presentation and said he was delighted that the scheme is finally moving forward after being delayed by approximately four years due to legal issues.
- Cllr. Glennon welcomes the scheme, and after a number of years of legal difficulties with same he stated that it was great to see progress being made and hopes the scheme advances quickly.
- Cllr. Blake asked would single storey dwellings not be a better fit for the needs of the people who will be living in the properties.
 - Ms. Fallon informed Cllr. Cronin that some of the houses will be occupied by people who have an intellectual disability who would not need to be housed in a single storey dwelling and might need to have a carer living with them.
- Cllr. Timmins enquired about the allocation process of the scheme and about similar co. wide programmes.
 - Ms. Fallon advised Cllr. Timmins that the allocation team would assess client needs during the allocation process. Three similar schemes have been developed, housing either elderly people or people with a disability. The programme is on infill lands in housing estates in various locations, to date no problems have arisen.
- Ms. Kilkenny said that it is brilliant that this scheme has finally come to pass. A scheme which is designed to fulfil specific needs which can be adapted if needed.
- Cllr. O’Neill asked if the Carrig Glen entrance would be used.
 - Ms. Fallon advised that the Carrig Glen entrance would not be used.

- Cllr. Timmins thanked Ms. Klauer and Ms. Fallon for their presentation and said he looked forward to seeing the Part 8 application before The Members soon.

4. To receive a presentation: Briefing in advance of a statutory public consultation in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) on the N81 Hollywood Cross Rural Traffic Calming Road Safety Improvement Scheme (RSIS)

Mr. Doyle gave a Briefing to The Members on the proposed Hollywood Traffic Calming and Bus Stops in Advance of Part 8 Public Consultation.

Questions & Answers:

- Cllr. Glennon welcomed the information received, stating this scheme has been a long time in the making. He said that the parking facility is very important and should not be forgotten. He advised that if the preferred site is not a runner there is land available to the north side. He did wish that this development had moved more quickly. He thanked Mr. Doyle for the briefing.
- Cllr. Cronin thanked Mr. Doyle for the briefing stating there is a huge demand for the bus service as it is covering the whole of West Wicklow.
- Cllr. O’Neill enquired how this scheme will tie in with the “New N81” and the overall cost.
 - Mr. Bowes informed Cllr. O’Neill that the Tallaght to Hollywood Scheme would be progressed separately. He stated that Glending to Hollywood is agreed. That there is a tie-in point at the Knockroe bend scheme. He stated that the safety scheme itself all ties-in on the alignment.
 - Mr. Bowes advised that TII committed funding in 2023 for this scheme and hopes to progress to site this year and have it turned around pretty quickly.
- Cllr. Timmins thanked Cllr. Glennon for his commitment in pursuing this safety scheme. He asked the nature of the crossing, the speed limit thereon and would site lines for traffic coming from Blessington and leaving Hollywood Village be improved.
 - Mr. Doyle advised that the speed limit could be reviewed downwards of 80km. He said the safety improvements will improve statics.
 - Ms. Kilkenny stated the traffic calming scheme will be a definite improvement.
 - Mr. Bowes said that the speed limit could be dropped in the future, this could be made a controlled crossing.

5. To receive a presentation: Briefing in advance of a non-statutory public consultation the Route Options for the N81 Whitestown Lower Project and the n81 Hangman’s Bend Tuckmill Project.

The Members were briefed on the upcoming public consultation which is being held to inform the public of the proposal and to invite submissions on the options being considered. The closing date for submissions is Friday 26th April 2024.

A copy of the presentation will be forwarded to all.

Questions & Answers:

- Cllr. Timmins asked for confirmation as to whether there were three different projects or two.
 - Two were confirmed:
N81 Whitestown Lower Project and
N81 Hangman's Bend & Tuckmill Project
- Cllr. Glennon asked for a realistic timeframe and expressed concerns surrounding lands being frozen on preferred route options.
- Cllr. Cronin asked if landowners had been informed of the option selection.
 - The Members were informed that 240 letters had issued to landowners regarding the upcoming consultation and they were invited to get in touch. There is a project liaison officer who will meet with landowners.
- Cllr. O'Neill asked if there was a figure available for accidents which have occurred on this 2km stretch of road.
 - Mr. Ahern advised Cllr. O'Neill that this information was available to them but that they were asked not to issue same due to GDPR restrictions.
- Cllr. Timmins said that he fully supports and welcomes this project and looks forward to seeing it progress. He advised that there are ongoing issues with Whitestown which the consultants may want to check.

Cathaoirleach Edward Timmins asked could the meeting be extended to 1pm to allow for all on the agenda to be covered. It was proposed by Cllr. Glennon, seconded by Cllr. Cronin and agreed by all that the meeting be extended.

6. Update on Baltinglass RRDF

Park

Mr. Graham advised The Members that the tenders are due to be returned, processed and budgets allocated before the next meeting.

Mr. Graham said that there have been some issues regarding the extension of the walkway around the second soccer pitch in the park.

- Cllr. Timmins asked that the provision of the walkway around the entire park be made a priority and stipulated the importance of same.

Town Centre

Mr. Byrne informed The Members that this project is proving problematic due to design information being poor. Mr. Byrne ensured The Members that they are working through it and they will get the job done.

- Cllr. Timmins asked that the consultant's invoicing be monitored closely to ensure that any additional costs are not incurred by Wicklow County Council.

Bridge

Mr. Byrne informed The Members that he is hopeful that he will have a positive update for them from the NTA by the next meeting.

Courthouse

Mr. Cullen advised The Members that a contractor is ready to start plaster and paint work to the exterior of the building.

Ms. Kilkenny said that the repairs to the Courthouse roof will be dealt with as a priority.

Members Comments and Observations (Baltinglass RRDF)

- Cllr. Mullen enquired if there is a revised construction timeline as he has received correspondence from Tidy Town groups requesting same, they are keen to carry out planting projects around the town.
 - Mr. Byrne advised Cllr. Mullen that the issues will mainly affect pre-construction works, which may result in a couple of months extension to the programme.
- Cllr. Glennon commented on the bridge and said that traffic lights will not work in Baltinglass.
 - Mr. Byrne agreed with Cllr. Glennon's views on this matter.
- Cllr. O'Neill asked Mr. Byrne again about the footpath to the Care Centre being included and was advised by Mr. Byrne that it would not be included in Phase 1. He explained that we will have to wait and see what extra funding becomes available in May.
- Mr. Cullen stated that it would be advisable to apply political pressure for further funding for Baltinglass RRDF, highlighting that the application for same is with the Department and awaiting a decision.

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

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

Mr. Byrne advised The Members that 2.5 to 3 km of the N81 had been cleaned.

Members Comments and Observations (national roads)

- Cllr. Glennon stated that he welcomes any improvements on the N81 but would like to see a new N81.
- Cllr. O'Neill said that he has received calls from people living north of Blessington complaining of the state of the road, saying that the height of the road is causing water to run into people's yards, destroying them.
 - Mr. Byrne advised Cllr. O'Neill that the issues he is highlighting are mainly due to climate change and heavy rain. He said that there is not adequate funding for all maintenance issues attached to the N81.
- Cllr. Timmins asked could anything be done about trucks not adhering to stop signs when joining the N81.

- Mr. Byrne advised Cllr. Timmins that this is a Garda Síochána issue.

Members Comments and Observations (non - national roads)

- Cllr. O'Neill asked could the problems with Knockieran Bridge be brought to a full council meeting as the district's hands are tied due to the ESB being in charge of the bridge but not carrying out any of the repairs.
 - Mr. Byrne stated that the Law Department of Wicklow County Council had given legal advice to the district regarding the bridge. The legal advice received was that the district could not carry out any works to Knockieran Bridge as the ESB are the owners of the bridges and therefore responsible for maintenance of same.
 - Cllr. Timmins asked if it was possible to escalate the importance of getting the responsibility of the maintenance of the bridges resolved.
 - Mr. Byrne advised that there would be huge costs involved if Wicklow County Council were to take the bridges in charge and carry out resurfacing works there on.
- Cllr. Mullen asked could we expedite road maintenance works now that the weather should be improving. He spoke of climate change and increased flooding incidences particularly in the areas of Tinahely, Shillelagh and Carnew.
- Cllr. Glennon welcomed the roads report and reiterated the need for additional street lights in Baltinglass.
- Cllr. Cronin thanked Mr. Byrne and Mr. Graham for the report. And asked could the Crehelp Road past the crossroads be assessed. Cllr. Cronin requested an update on Colbinstown Bridge and enquired could the situation of public lighting at the Dunlavin Medical Centre be addressed.
 - Mr. Byrne said he would assess the Crehelp Road. Regarding Colbinstown Bridge he informed Cllr. Cronin that survey works are ongoing and he awaits the report on this matter. Mr. Byrne will look at the lighting situation at the Dunlavin Medical Centre but advised Cllr. Cronin that no funding was available. Works would have to be funded under a special scheme.
- Cllr. Blake thanked the District Engineers for getting the three lights in Shillelagh switched on.
- Cllr. Timmins asked could something be done with the white lines on the R747. And, stated that the lights at the Talbotstown School needed to be improved.
 - Mr. Graham advised Cllr. Timmins that he has highlighted to the white line contractor that the R747 should be a priority. And, that funding for light improvement at the Talbotstown School has been applied for but to date nothing has been approved. He also advised that three projects under the Safe Routes to School programme have been applied for. Schools need to apply for this funding.
- Ms. Kilkenny reminded The Members again of the importance of getting their requests for discretionary projects to Mr. Byrne and Mr. Graham.

- Following on from a query regarding the provision of extra bus stops across the district raised at a previous meeting, Mr. Byrne advised that some bus stops across the county were funded by discretionary funding and informed The Members that half a million euro has been allocated to each Local Authority which should allow for the acquisition of additional bus stops in our district.
 - Cllr. Blake commended the existing bus service across Baltinglass Municipal District, but highlighted the need for further bus stops.

8. To consider the allocation of Baltinglass Municipal District estate development grants.

A proposed allocation of Baltinglass Municipal District estate development funding for 2024 was presented to The Members for their consideration. Mr. Cullen advised the members that the breakdown of funding for each estate was allocated based on the assessment of applications received. He pointed out that the final decision of the allocation was a reserved function.

It was proposed by Cllr. Blake to accept the 2024 draft allocation presented, seconded by Cllr. Glennon and agreed by all.

9. Correspondence

- Mr. Cullen informed The Members that he had received a call from Superintendent Gavin Hegarty to inform him that he had left his post and was not being replaced. Superintendent Gavin Hegarty conveyed his appreciation for the support he received from Baltinglass Municipal District elected members and officials during his time in the district.
 - It was proposed by Cllr. Glennon, seconded by Cllr. Blake and agreed by all, that Mr. Cullen write to Mr. Drew Harris, Garda Commissioner, copying Taoiseach Simon Harris thereon, to express their concerns with the situation of policing in West Wicklow with no Garda Superintendent in situ.
 - Cllr. Cronin stated that there is no Garda Car in Dunlavin yet the Gardaí are expected to cover a huge area.
- Mr. Cullen informed The Members that Eleanor and Kevin Lee had requested further funding for their continued work on the Coollattin Canadian Connection twinning initiatives and that he has requested they send in a list of expenses incurred in 2023 and also details of plans for 2024. And, he advised that this request would be listed on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Mr. Cullen updated The Members on the various community and district grants which are currently open for application.

10. Any other business

- Cllr. O'Neill raised concerns regarding the current situation at The Newtown Square Centre, highlighting the ongoing maintenance issues and anti-social behaviour in the area.
 - Mr. Cullen advised that he has been working in conjunction with the Gardaí and new CCTV cameras will be installed over the coming weeks. He also pointed out that this area is not in charge of WCC and responsibility for maintenance issues lies with the Management Company. Letters have issued to the Management Company highlighting the complaints raised by the elected members as well as residents of the area and members of the wider community.

- Cllr. O'Neill also raised concerns regarding direct provision facilities in the area and the effects of same on the community as well as those residing in same.

11. Date of next meeting

It was proposed by Cllr. Timmins, seconded by Cllr. Mullen and agreed by all that the next Baltinglass Municipal District meeting would be held on Monday 22nd April at 10.30am in Murphy's Hotel in Tinahely.

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

Signed: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed: _____
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated: 22nd April 2024

DRAFT