

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in Murphy's Hotel, Tinahely, Co. Wicklow on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 at 10.30am.**

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

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

**Transportation and Roads**

Mr. Conor Page, Senior Executive Engineer  
Mr. Aaron O'Connor, Executive Engineer

Cathaoirleach Edward Timmins opened the April meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District and welcomed all present to Murphy's Hotel Tinahely where this month's meeting was being held in honour of our colleague Cllr. Vincent Blake and his upcoming retirement.

**Apology:** Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer.

**1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024.**

It was proposed by Cllr. Mullen, seconded by Cllr. Cronin and unanimously agreed to confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

**2. Matters Arising - None**

**3. Receive a presentation on the Safe Routes to Schools Design Briefing for the project in Dunlavin.**

Mr. Page and Mr. O'Connor gave a detailed and informative presentation to The Members on the Safe Routes to Schools Design Briefing for the project in Dunlavin. A copy of the presentation had been forwarded to The Members prior to the meeting.

**Questions & Answers:**

- Cllr. Cronin enquired if home owners and The Green Committee, who will be affected by the one way system, are aware of what is proposed and asked if a meeting will be held with them before works begin. Cllr. Cronin stated that it is a brilliant scheme and needed in the area. Cllr. Cronin believes the project will receive the backing and co-operation from both the public and the school.
  - Mr. O'Connor advised Cllr. Cronin that they have not met as yet. But said that all stakeholders will be informed of the design and given an opportunity to voice their opinion.
    - Mr. Byrne advised that a safety audit would be carried out to ensure that the best route is chosen.

- Cllr. Glennon asked that residents affected by the changes be accommodated as best as the design allows and that the Transportation and Roads section co-ordinate with the Planning Section with regards to the one way system, as it is his understanding that traffic management has been addressed in an approved planning permission.
  - Mr. O'Connor stated that if they can accommodate residents they will.
- Cllr. O'Neill agreed that this was a great initiative. He does believe there are more dangerous school locations within the district which need to be addressed. He said he would like to see school buses clearly marked and like other countries, laws to ensure no overtaking of school buses once they have stopped.
  - Mr. O'Connor advised Cllr. O'Neill that all 24 schools who applied are on the programme. If schools did not apply Wicklow County Council cannot add them now as the application period has closed.
- Cllr. Mullen enquired about the 8 key stages of the programme and the timeline to get to this stage. He asked about the plans for Tinahely, stating that Tinahely has become very busy due to new builds. He also enquired about the cost and funding of the programme. He believes the programme makes sense and will enhance the school life experience. He congratulated Mr. Page and Mr. O'Connor on their input to date.
  - Mr. O'Connor explained that 100% of funding for the programme comes from the NTA and was approved in Jan / Feb 2024. He stated that the first stage had taken quite some time, but that having the design worked on in-house is expediting the programme. He advised that meetings were held with schools, but when told they may lose some parking spaces had not made applications. He advised that Tinahely did not make an application, therefore were not on the list. He believes that the next opening for applications will have a greater uptake.
    - Ms. Kilkenny stated that it was up to the schools to apply, but that the programme is closed to applications now. Ms. Kilkenny advised The Members to have school's Board of Management primed for future programmes.
- Cllr. Blake stated that the programme was well advertised and schools made aware of it. He asked if the programme design in Arklow is working.
  - Mr. O'Connor advised that there had been some objections and requests for loss of seven parking spaces to be reinstated. But, that the scheme as designed is working and has achieved its goal, that is, dangerous driving at the school has ceased. He said we need to stand firm as the safety of school going children has to come first.
    - Mr. Byrne stated that it is a cultural change and people need to accept it. Policy is to move parking away from the front of schools.
    - Mr. Page advised that schools country wide will be standardised, adhering to NTA design guidelines.
- Cllr. Cronin enquired about the time-frame and asked if there were exact dates.

- Mr. O'Connor advised that the road safety audit is to be progressed and he will revert with dates.
- Cllr. Timmins thanked Mr. Page & Mr. O'Connor.

#### **4. Update on Baltinglass RRDF**

Mr. Byrne advised The Members that the design information had been received and surface work on drainage was underway. He reported that no major complaints had been received to date.

##### **Bridge**

Mr. Byrne informed The Members that a pedestrian crossing (a zebra crossing without flashing beacons) at The Dutchman's could be feasible.

##### **Courthouse**

Mr. Cullen advised The Members that a contractor is ready to start plaster and paint work to the exterior of the building. He is hopeful that works will commence in May.

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 asked that we continue to keep communication open with local business owners. He stressed the importance of the works on the crossing on the bridge being expedited as a large increase to the existing footfall is coming. He said that he would appreciate an update on same.
  - Mr. Byrne advised Cllr. Mullen that as soon as an approval is received both himself and Mr. Graham will take it on and will be able to progress works as it is not on the N81.
- Cllr. Glennon stated that it would be great to see work on the bridge progressed. He said that it is a good time to put political pressure on our TDs now that we have a Taoiseach living in our county. We also have Steven Matthews TD, we should try to get political action and get something done regarding the N81.
- Cllr. Cronin said that it is great to see so much work being progressed, commenting on the drive Ms. Kilkenny has for West Wicklow and her being a great advocate for the district. Regarding the crossing at The Dutchman's, Cllr. Cronin said she has been inundated with requests from her constituents asking her to address the issues they are experiencing, she thanked Mr. Byrne for the positive update.

#### **5. 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.

##### **Members Comments and Observations**

- Cllr. Mullen asked that a request be made for a further allocation of rural roads funding. He pointed out that due to the adverse weather conditions over the last number of years a large amount of rural roads have been washed away. He asked could the drainage and flooding situation in the South of the district be addressed. Cllr. Mullen welcomed the restoration improvement schemes which are scheduled for June/July 2024.

- Mr. Byrne said that ongoing maintenance works were being carried out on rural roads to address pothole issues. Regarding flooding, Mr. Byrne believes a major scheme is needed to address the problem and he will be discussing this with Mr. Michael Flynn.
  - Cllr. Blake advised that Mr. Graham was unsuccessful when he had applied for flood relief funding. He said meetings were held and groups set up. Schemes were submitted by Wicklow County Council.
    - Mr. Byrne said he will discuss flood relief schemes with Mr. Marc Devereux.
  - Cllr. Glennon welcomed the work on the Hollywood to GAA footpath. And, is looking forward to discussing the proposed Part 8 for the N81 Hollywood Cross Traffic Calming Road Safety Improvement Scheme at the Municipal District meeting in May. He also asked that the Hollywood Park & Ride project is not forgotten, he asked that the Engineers keep driving it until it gets across the line. He reinstated the fact that there is alternative land available and that landowners should not be allowed to hold up progress on the Hollywood Park & Ride.
- Cllr. Glennon complimented all involved with the progress being made at the Lockstown Junction and looked forward to the road being reopened.
- Cllr. O'Neill brought up the poor condition of Knockieran Bridge.
  - Cllr. Cronin requested that the Crehelp Road be included in next year's roads programme. Cllr. Cronin said that she has received numerous calls regarding an issue of speeding on the Church Road to Milltown, and asked if Mr. Byrne could look at signage for the location. Cllr. Cronin stated that the road from Knocknagull to Rathsallagh required some minor maintenance to address potholes.

#### **6. To consider request from Blessington and District Forum to officially twin Blessington with Castel Maggiore, Italy.**

A discussion was held regarding the request from Blessington and District Forum to officially twin Blessington with Castel Maggiore.

- Cllr. O'Neill strongly objected to the request stating that he believes it is a waste of taxpayers' money and that the members should not be supporting the Blessington and District Forum as they are selective in who they allow attend their meetings.
- Cllr. Mullen said that there is a twinning protocol committee and twinning policy to adhere to, stating that the district needs to twin with more locations in European areas. He believes the agreements should be treated as a positive thing, that E.U. friendship agreements are important for the district. He stated that Cllr. Timmins is fulfilling his job as Cathaoirleach by taking up the invitation to visit Castel Maggiore.
- Cllr. Timmins noted that he totally disagreed with Cllr. O'Neill's comments and stated that twinning agreements have proven to bring enhanced tourism and economic benefits to towns and regions participating in same.

It was proposed by Cllr. Blake, seconded by Cllr. Mullen and following a vote taken by Mr. Cullen it was agreed by a margin of 5 for and 1 against to officially twin Blessington with Castel Maggiore, Italy. For: Cllr. Blake, Cllr. Cronin, Cllr. Glennon, Cllr. Mullen & Cllr. Timmins. Against: Cllr. O'Neill.

**7. To consider request from Coollattin Canadian Connection group to fund their twinning projects in 2024.**

Following a short discussion with members commending the work carried out by the Coollattin Canadian Connection group it was proposed by Cllr. Blake, seconded by Cllr Mullen and agreed by all to allocate €1,250.00 to fund the group's twinning projects in 2024.

**8. To consider and allocate Baltinglass Municipal District Festival Funding 2024.**

Mr. Cullen advised that the funding available in Baltinglass MD will consist of €7,000.00 from Baltinglass MD Festival Fund with an additional €1,800.00 to be allocated from the Baltinglass Economic Development Code.

The members welcomed the increase in festival funding and agreed that it was important to ensure that the funding is allocated to smaller community festivals which are the highlight of the year for many village and town communities. It was proposed by Cllr. Blake, seconded by Cllr. Mullen and agreed by all to allocate funding of €8,800.00 as proposed with the addition of €250.00 to the Music Under the Mountains Festival bringing their funding allocation to €750.00.

**8. Correspondence – None**

**9. Any other business.**

A presentation was made to Cllr. Blake on his retirement and glowing tributes were made by all present. The members and officials present agreed that Cllr. Blake's conduct, support and friendship will leave an overwhelming void in the district being the person everyone turned to for advice and a chat.

A presentation was also made to Ms. Kilkenny on her retirement. Ms. Kilkenny has been an amazing Director of Services for the district, ensuring her beloved West Wicklow had a voice and was well represented at the management table. All present agreed that Ms. Kilkenny is a true friend to us all in West Wicklow, tributes were paid, thanking her for everything she has achieved and assisted us in achieving for the betterment of the district.

**11. Date of next meeting**

The next Baltinglass Municipal District meeting will be held on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024