

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in Blessington Civic Offices on 16th December 2024 at 10.30am

Present: Cathaoirleach Patsy Glennon
Councillor Avril Cronin
Councillor Gerry O'Neill
Councillor Peter Stapleton
Councillor Jason Mulhall

In Attendance: Ms. Theresa O' Brien, District Manager
Mr. Pat Byrne, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer
Mr. Liam Cullen, District Administrator
Ms. Christina Brophy, Clerical Officer
Mr. Stephen Clarke, Town Regeneration Officer
Ms. Aideen Klauer, Senior Executive Engineer, Housing

Apologies:

Cathaoirleach Patsy Glennon opened the meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District and welcomed all present.

1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 18th November 2024.

It was proposed by Cllr. Cronin, seconded by Cllr. Mulhall and unanimously agreed by all members to confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 18th November 2024.

2. Matters Arising

No matters arising.

3. Update on Baltinglass RRDF

Mr. Stephen Clarke updated the members on the progress to date for the workings of the Blessington Town Team and in particular the progress of the Blessington Town Centre First policy. He notified the members that he has been liaising with the Town Team to formulate

an overall plan for Blessington. He advised that funding of €50,000 is available to carry out a plan to upgrade Blessington Town Square

Mr. Clarke stated that in relation to the HSE building a survey has been carried out by a consultancy firm and an architect appointed to the project, Wicklow County Council are also liaising with the community to ensure the best use of the building is achieved.

Members Comments and Observations

Cllr. O' Neill asked Mr Clarke for more details on the plans for Blessington Town Centre, Mr. Clarke reiterated that there is no design plan in place yet pointing out we are still waiting to appoint a consultant to develop a plan. Cllr. O' Neill stated that it is very important that the elected representatives for the area be kept informed of all plans for Blessington and he feels that this has not been the case to date.

Cllr. Mulhall requested an update on Blessington RRDF Category 2 funding pointing out that 1.2 million was allocated in November 2021. Mr Clarke advised that this funding was divided into 3 strands, the upgrade works on the HSE Building, purchase of a building/site in Blessington and to get Blessington Greenway ready

District Engineer, Pat Byrne advised that he has held preliminary meetings with ESB, Eircom regarding the undergrounding of services in the town.

District Administrator Liam Cullen pointed out that an architect has been appointed to draw up plans for the old HSE building to convert the building to a Greenway hub and community space. He also pointed out that Wicklow County Council are currently looking at options regarding the purchase of a suitable site or building in the town, Mr Cullen said that he would welcome the members input in sourcing a suitable site or building in the town

Cllr. Glennon echoes Cllr. O' Neill's comments about the Councillors being kept informed and he also stated that the elected members should retain the ultimate say on any major infrastructural plan for the town.

Cllr. O' Neill stated that as an elected member he does not know the cost of the purchasing the old HSE building on Kilbride Road, pointing out that it is public money being spent and the process should be transparent.

Cllr. Mulhall said that he would like see further progression on the Blessington RRDF, he fears the lack of progression on the proposed projects could jeopardise current and future funding for the town.

4. Update on Baltinglass RRDF

Mr. Dermot Graham informed the members that Baltinglass Park is almost at its completion stage, he is just awaiting safety sign off on the recently installed playground. He advised that the playground will remain closed over the Christmas period for health and safety reasons. The walkways around the park will be completed in early 2025. Mr. Graham commended the local GSS team for pushing through some of the works and getting the ducting ready for the CCTV. Cllr. Mulhall thanked Mr. Graham for work on the park to date and looked forward to the completion of the park.

Mr. Byrne informed the members that in relation the Bus Stop and traffic calming measures at Hollywood there was a design meeting in November and it is hoped this will go tender early in the New Year.

Mr. Byrne also pointed out that TII line marking crews are currently on site renewing the reflective studs on the N81.

5. To Consider Roads Reports (National and Non-National Roads)

Mr. Graham presented the report to the members and informed them that extra funding was secured for Baltinglass Municipal District, this announcement was made in November 2024. As a result of receiving the extra funding a number of additional Road Restoration Improvement Schemes were added to the 2024 programme.

Members Comments and Observations

Cllr. O' Neill conveyed his thanks to both Engineers for their reports adding that it is good to see works happening on the N81, the reflective studs will be a great improvement and are very much required.

Cllr. O' Neill also thanked Mr. Pat Byrne for the recent works at Knockieran.

Cllr O'Neill also asked for gully clean up to be carried out in the Blessington area, Mr. Byrne replied he periodically brings in a contractor to jet the gullies and this is currently being arranged.

Cllr. O' Neill also asked if there is any update on the traffic safety plan for Burgage. Mr. Byrne replied there is movement on this issue, he is hopeful that a consultant would be appointed before Christmas.

Cllr. Cronin asked for an update on Colbinstown Bridge and also informed the Engineers that the road from Dunlavin to Hollywood at Lemonstown was badly flooded during recent heavy rain.

Cllr. Stapleton commended and thanked both Engineers for the work carried out by them throughout the entire district during 2024, he said he looks forward to working alongside both engineers in the coming year ahead.

The other Councillors echoed Cllr. Stapleton's comments thanking both Engineers for their hard work over the last year.

6. To consider the naming of new housing estate in Burgage More, Blessington (106 units)

Ms. Aideen Klauer, presented the members with a proposed name for the new estate at Burgage More, she proposed "Droimneach Beag" which translates in English to the "Lesser Backed Gull", which references to the wetland birds of the lake.

Cllr. O' Neill stated that the Blessington lake is man-made and proposed that it may be more suitable to reference the old village under the lake. Cllr. Glennon echoes Cllr. O' Neill's comments. Cllr. Cronin felt that name "Droimneach Beag" is too complicated to pronounce and spell for people particularly any non-national residents who may reside there in the future, she would be in favour of a simpler more straight forward name.

Cllr. O' Neill asked if they could have an extension of time to agree on a name. Ms. Theresa O' Brien said this really needs to be pushed on so utility companies can be set up. Ms. Klauer agreed stating she is being pushed to get the services set up and in relation to the name. Cllr. Stapleton replied that in the middle of a housing crisis he is not in favour of

delaying the progression of the housing units for the reason of choosing a name. Ms. O' Brien said Irish names can be complicated so she understands their point of view, she would allow a delay of a day or two but two weeks is too long. Ms. O' Brien also pointed out that members need to be engaging with council officials on issues like this, highlighting that Ms. Klauer had sent this request out by email in advance of the meeting.

Cllr. Glennon suggested the name of "Slí Bhríde" in recognition of the lady who owned the land prior to the council purchasing it, Ms Bridie Coughlan. Cllr. O' Neill seconded Cllr Glennon's proposal and it was agreed to name the estate "Slí Bhríde"

Cllr. Mulhall asked that a proper traffic management plan be arranged in Burgage while the housing is being constructed in order to minimise disruption to residents in the area.

7. To consider funding application for Baltinglass Municipal District Tidy Towns groups.

Cllr. Mulhall asked the members to consider allocating funds from the discretionary budget to active participating Tidy Town groups, he pointed out that the funding would have to be equitable to all groups. Cllr. Mulhall proposes that each councillor agree to allocate €1,000 to be divided between the discretionary fund and/or the Economic Development Fund (€500 per group)

Cllr. Glennon, Cllr. O' Neill & Cllr. Cronin were not in favour of allocating money from the discretionary fund as a collective group of councillors, they feel it should be a decision for each councillor to decide how they spend their discretionary fund. Both Cllr. Cronin and Cllr Glennon added that they have continually supported Tidy Towns groups in the District over the years and will continue to do so in the coming years. Cllr. Stapleton said he thinks it is a great initiative and would like to establish better relationships with Tidy Towns groups so he would be supportive of this proposal.

Cllr. Stapleton suggested giving half the proposed amount from the economic development fund and half from the discretionary fund.

Following a lengthy discussion on the matter, Cllr. Mulhall then proposed that each Councillor allocate €250 each from the Economic Development Fund to the thirteen participating Tidy Towns groups this would total €3,250. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Glennon and unanimously agreed by all present

Cllr. Mulhall will furnish Mr. Liam Cullen with the active group names.

8. Correspondence

Mr. Cullen advised the members that the half way to St. Patrick's Day festival in Blessington did not go ahead as planned in 2024, the money allocated to that festival has been returned Baltinglass MD.

Mr. Cullen also informed the members that Wicklow County Council recently purchased a yard beside Blessington Credit Union for €200,000, he pointed out that no decision has been made yet as to the exact planned usage of the yard however he pointed out that it is a key strategic site in the town and the acquisition of the site opens up a number of possibilities for the future development of Blessington town centre. He advised that members will kept updated and be central any decision on the development of the site.

9. Any Other Business.

District Administrator informed the members that the official opening of the new Walkway in Russborough will take place on Tuesday 17th December at 10am and that also the official opening of Blessington Town Park will be on Thursday 19th December at 10am.

Cllr. Mulhall reported the streetlights on Main Street in Blessington have not been working since storm Darragh. Mr. Byrne said there is very little the District Engineers can do in relation to this other than report the issues to the lighting contractor in the same way that members of the public report outages.

Cllr. Cronin pointed out that nearly all the lights are out in Dunlavin and that had it not been for the Christmas lights, the town would have been in darkness over the Christmas period and that it is now in darkness since the lights came down, , she feels West Wicklow is forgotten about.

Mr. Graham said that this is a national issue not just affecting West Wicklow. To put it into context Mr. Graham stated that the average winter has 300 faults, at the moment there are 600 logged faults that has been building up since the last lighting contractor withdrew their services. Mr. Graham informed the members that the new contractor, Killaree Lighting has two crews working on the backlog.

Cllr. Cronin expressed her congratulations to Edward Timmins who has now been elected as a TD and hopes that he will put West Wicklow back on the map in the Dáil. The other members present also passed on their congratulation to Edward Timmins and wished him well in his new role as a TD in Dail Eireann

Ms. O' Brien took the opportunity to wish all the Staff and Members and Happy Christmas saying it has been her pleasure to be the District manager of Baltinglass Municipal District.

Cllr. Glennon expressed his best wishes for Christmas and New Year to all staff and councillors in Baltinglass Municipal District. He also wished Edward Timmins TD the best of luck stating Mr. Timmins is a decent man and has always been a pleasure to work with on Wicklow County Council.

9. Date of next meeting.

The date of the next meeting will be Monday January 27th at 10:30am.

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

Signed: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed: _____
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated:

