

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in Blessington Civic Offices on 26<sup>th</sup> February 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. Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer
- Mr. Liam Cullen, District Administrator
- Ms. Aideen Russell, Assistant Staff Officer

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

**Votes of Sympathy**

Cllr. Blake expressed a vote of sympathy to the family of James (Jim) Walker of 8 Bachelor's Walk, Shillelagh, Co. Wicklow, who died peacefully in Our Lady's Hospice, Wicklow, on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024.

And to DJ Pollard & his family on the passing of his sister-in-law Sarah Behan of Vevay Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow, and formerly of Corner House, Shillelagh, Co. Wicklow on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024, peacefully at St. Vincent's University Hospital.

Ms. Kilkenny expressed a vote of sympathy to our colleague and friend Nicola Fleming on the passing of her Dear Mother, Carmel Burke, formerly of 10 Station Road, Avoca, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2024 in the loving care of the doctor, nurses and staff at St. Colman's Hospital, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow.

Cllr. Timmins expressed a vote of sympathy to the family of Kevin Browne of Ballintlea, Hollyfort, Gorey, Co. Wexford and formerly of Bawnogue, Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow. Who died 17<sup>th</sup> February 2024 peacefully at his residence.

May they rest in peace.

A minutes silence was observed.

**1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024.**

It was proposed by Cllr. Blake, seconded by Cllr. Glennon and unanimously agreed to confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 once the following two amendments were made.

- 1) Under Members Comments and Observations on Active Travel / Rural Fund Cllr. Blake asked that we amend the comment made on the scope for road widening at the school in Coolafancy to the “road down past the school”.
- 2) Under Members Comments and Observations on National Roads Cllr. Cronin asked that we amend the comment made on Dunlavin Crèche to “Donard Crèche”.

## **2. Matters Arising**

Cllr. O’Neill asked for it to be recorded, that on reflection, he is not supportive of the proposal to accept the invitation to attend the seminar in Castle Maggiore in April 2024.

Cllr. Blake congratulated all employees and Elected Members of Wicklow County Council on their recent award for Council of the year 2023. He stated that it reflects the good work carried out by Wicklow County Council. All present agreed.

## **3. Update on Baltinglass RRDF**

### **Town Centre**

Mr. Byrne informed The Members that issues have arisen regarding underground works which had not been documented adequately by consultants. This is causing a lot of disruption as further exploratory digging is required. One crew at present is set up at the back of the Fire Station.

### **Bridge**

Mr. Graham reported that a draft brief has been forwarded to the NTA for their assessment and subsequent approval.

### **Courthouse**

Mr. Cullen advised The Members that pricing is being assessed for plaster and paint works required for the exterior of the courthouse and that works are planned to commence in April / May 2024.

Ms. Kilkenny stated that libraries were now within her new brief and that works on Baltinglass courthouse/library are a priority for her .

### **Park**

Mr. Graham advised The Members that a number of tenders for The Park went out this week. He does not have a crew on site at present due to works being carried out on housing estates.

### **CCTV**

Mr. Cullen informed The Members that provisions for Baltinglass CCTV are being made in the background so that works can be done in conjunction with the public realm works, he stated that it is better to get these works done now rather than having to revisit the area at a later date and reopen paths etc.

Ms. Kilkenny informed The Members that her new directorate includes Climate, Environment, Recreation and Amenity.

## **Members Comments and Observations (Baltinglass RRDF)**

- Cllr. Mullen welcomed commencement of works and asked that Mr. Graham have a chat with him after the meeting to discuss the concerns brought to him regarding the metal Christmas tree structure which is to be moved. He has been asked if the tree could be situated in the Town Centre.

Also, business owners have concerns regarding the planters that were provided by Wicklow County Council under “back to business” grants, but maintained by the business owners.

- Mr. Graham agreed that he will find a suitable location in the Town Centre for the planters.

#### **4. 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.

##### **Members Comments and Observations (national roads)**

- Cllr. Cronin again expressed her concerns regarding the dirt on the N81 covering white lines and cat’s eyes and asked for an update on the cleaning scheme.

- Mr. Byrne advised Cllr. Cronin that the plan is to clean 2km of the area which is worse affected, he reiterated the cost incurred and the amount of work/time that is needed to clean this amount of road.

Cllr. Cronin voiced concerns regarding the lack of public lighting at Annalecky Cross Roads, stating that it is extremely dangerous as it is an official bus stop, where people are standing on the road awaiting buses.

- Mr. Byrne advised that to add lighting to this area would have to be carried out under a larger traffic calming and road safety project as per TII guidelines. To date applications for this project have been unsuccessful but he will apply to TII again for a standalone project.
- Cllr. O’Neill stated that he was travelling to Tallaght recently and it was very noticeable that cat’s eyes disappeared at certain parts of the road, he asked if the cat’s eyes needed to be changed.
    - Mr. Byrne advised that the cat’s eyes do not need to be changed, that it is the dirt on the road which is causing the problem. He again informed The Members that cleaning this area of road costs approximately €6,000.00 per day and Baltinglass MD receive €25,000.00 annually from TII to cover all road cleaning.
    - Ms. Kilkenny asked Mr. Byrne & Mr. Graham to write to TII to inform them that these roads need to be cleaned on a more regular basis and that more funding is needed to do so.
    - Mr. Byrne commented that a huge volume of trucks use these roads on a daily basis. This results in extreme levels of dirt accumulating.
    - Cllr. Timmins asked Mr. Byrne for an update on Blessington South and was informed by Mr. Byrne that plans have been submitted for traffic calming measures, this is an extensive roads safety project as per TII requirements and we are now awaiting approval on same.

## **Members Comments and Observations (non - national roads)**

- Cllr. Mullen commended Wicklow County Council Staff on works carried out to date and asked that the following issues be addressed:
  - Increased flooding incidences occurring especially in areas of Tinahely and Shillelagh, Area Engineers need to liaise with The Roads Department of Wicklow County Council to secure funding for works needed on drainage.
  - Askanagap lighting
    - Mr. Graham acknowledged that these works need to be progressed and ensured The Members that he has been working extensively regarding same.
- Cllr. Glennon thanked Mr. Byrne and Mr. Graham for works carried out throughout the district recently, highlighting in particular the ongoing works at Lockstown / Valleymount.

Cllr. Cronin also thanked the Engineers for the progress at Lockstown / Valleymount to date and asked the question, could school transport be allowed to travel through local access only area?

- Mr. Byrne advised Cllr. Cronin that yes school transport could travel on the local access route only, but that the road was open to the last house only, as the existing road will be dug up. The works will be carried out as quickly as possible. The diversion will be in place for approximately two months.
- Any update on Colbanstown Bridge.
- Cllr. Cronin stated that the advertisement of road diversions from Brannockstown to the R756 Dunlavin were in Kildare Papers and not local papers or social media.
  - Mr. Byrne advised that there is no road closure licence in place for these works as they rejected the conditions Mr. Byrne had requested. He will find out exact details.
- Cllr. Cronin was advised by Mr. Byrne that with regard to provision of a footpath to the Donard Crèche he is looking at all options available to him.
- Cllr. O'Neill said that he is delighted with the progress of works at Lockstown / Valleymount but asked if Mr. Byrne could look at both signage and gritting on the Hollywood to Laragh Road diversion as he has concerns about same.
  - Mr. Byrne agreed to look at both.
- Cllr. Timmins enquired about white line works on the Kiltegan to Baltinglass Road and was informed by Mr. Graham that the contractor should be completing these works, weather permitting, over the next few weeks.
- Cllr. Blake enquired about the Carnew Shillelagh Road up to and including Coolattin junction.
  - Mr. Graham agreed to address this matter.
- Cllr. Blake enquired again about 3 public lights at Ballard Upper which are not working.

- Mr. Graham promised to contact the ESB and have an update for Cllr. Blake before the next MD meeting.

## **5. Funding for Bus Stops in Baltinglass Municipal District**

A discussion was held regarding current bus routes and bus stops in the district and the possibility of applying for funding to enable bus stops along the route to be upgraded to make them safer and more accessible. Also, the possibility of changes being made to routes to include more suitable locations which would link up with tourist attractions, village centres etc.

- Mr. Graham & Mr. Byrne will speak with the appropriate sections and find out where funding came from for similar upgrades in other areas.

## **6. Correspondence**

Mr. Cullen updated The Members on the various community grants available for 2024.

## **7. Any other business**

- Ms. Kilkenny advised The Members that a public LAP information day will be held on Friday 1st March 2024 in The Coimín Centre, Main Street, Blessington, Co. Wicklow W91 F77F. The plan team will be available to provide advice to The Members and the public on how to make a submission and to provide information on the new plan.
- Ms. Kilkenny also reminded The Members to ensure their discretionary funding lists are given to Mr. Cullen, Mr. Byrne or Mr. Graham ASAP if they haven't already done so.
- Cllr. Mullen and Cllr. Blake spoke of their concerns and the concerns of the community regarding a lithium exploration project and the granting of a licence to prospect in 150 townlands over 50 square kilometres across southwest Wicklow and Carlow.
  - Ms. Kilkenny advised The Members that following on from the full meeting of the council and the concerns raised at that meeting that she herself had done some research and believes the risk to the ground water supply is very low. Ms. Kilkenny also said that the public will have three separate opportunities to object to any proposed lithium exploration applications.
  - A discussion followed and it was proposed by Cllr. Mullen, seconded by Cllr. Blake and agreed by all, that Mr. Cullen write to Coillte on behalf of The Elected Members of Baltinglass Municipal District to voice their opposition, to Coillte permitting any lithium exploration to be carried out on lands owned by Coillte.
- Cllr. O'Neill voiced his concerns and the concerns brought to him by locals regarding the current operations status of Kilbride Army Camp. Cllr. O'Neill is also concerned for the safety of people being housed in overcrowded accommodation in West Wicklow.
  - Cllr. O'Neill proposed and it was seconded by Cllr. Timmins and agreed by all, that Mr. Cullen write to The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and to The Minister for Justice to ask for an update on the operations status of Kilbride Army Camp. And, to ask if the facility is being used to facilitate persons who have breached house rules in other such facilities.

**9. Date of next meeting**

The next Baltinglass Municipal District meeting will be held on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

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

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

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

Dated: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024