

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in Blessington Civic Offices on 22nd May 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

Wicklow County Arts Office,

Ms. Jenny Sherwin, Arts Officer
Ms. Síle Stewart, Arts Services Coordinator

Forward Planning Team

Ms. Sorcha Walsh, Senior Planner
Ms. Bernadette Harvey, Senior Executive Planner
Ms. Keara Kennedy, Assistant Planner
Mr. Michael Woods O'Rourke, Graduate Planner

Cathaoirleach John Mullen opened the May meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District and welcomed all present.

Vote of Sympathy

Cllr. Mullen expressed a vote of sympathy to our colleague and friend Eamonn Phelan and to his family, on the passing of his loving father Thomas (Tom) Phelan of Tynock, Kiltegan, Co. Wicklow.

A minutes silence was observed.

1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 24th April 2023.

It was proposed by Cllr. O'Neill, seconded by Cllr. Cronin and unanimously agreed to confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 24th April 2023.

An amendment to the agenda was agreed by all, allowing the update on Baltinglass Arts Programme to move to no. 3 of the agenda and the update on forward planning for Blessington to move to no. 4 of the agenda.

2. Matters Arising – None.

3. Update on Baltinglass Arts Programme.

Ms. Jenny Sherwin and Ms. Síle Stewart from the Wicklow County Arts Office gave a comprehensive and enlightening presentation regarding the new three year community led project that celebrates Baltinglass people and places – Creative Places Baltinglass.

With a three year budget of €375,000.00 the Creative Places Baltinglass Project will enable people from the local community to engage in conversations aimed at exploring and planning a range of creative and participatory projects for local people to enjoy.

The budget breakdown and a calendar of events were presented via a detailed PowerPoint presentation which would be sent via email to all Members.

Questions & Answers

- Cllr. Mullen asked that the presentation would be emailed to all Members as there was a lot of information within.
- Ms. Kilkenny thanked Jenny & Síle for their presentation and stated that the project was a fantastic opportunity for Baltinglass MD, having people on the ground in the West will definitely help with the disconnection felt with the East of the county.
- Cllr. Timmins spoke about the level of funding and asked that it be spent wisely, he asked that The Arts Council ensure that the events are advertised well to ensure as many people as possible know about them. Cllr. Timmins stated that the timing of this project ties in nicely with the refurbishment of The Court House and The Park where events could be held. Cllr. Timmins congratulated The Arts Team and wished them the best of luck with the project.

- Cllr. O'Neill wished The Arts Team the best of luck with the project and welcomed the engagement at a local level. He requested that any support that can be given to the Dunlavin Arts Festival be given.
- Cllr. Cronin welcomed the idea of Baltinglass Court House, once refurbished, being used for the likes of this project and its events. Cllr. Cronin would like to see the smaller schools in the hinterland areas being involved and asked if there were plans to engage with them. Cllr. Cronin was advised that all schools in the district will be included. Cllr. Cronin also brought up the issue facing the Dunlavin Arts Festival which is celebrating its 40th year. She stated that they are really struggling and need urgent support. Cllr. Cronin was advised that The Arts Council did not make the assessment regarding the funding awarded to the Dunlavin Arts Festival and cannot revisit the panel's decision but that they will be on the ground and will visit the Festival.
- Cllr. Blake thanked The Arts Team for their presentation and stated that the project would enhance the community. He said it was great to see the elderly being involved and that he hoped we could build on the legacy of the three year project and develop it further.
- Cllr. Glennon welcomed the project and stated that anything which will help to bridge the gap between our Municipal District and the East of the County was very much appreciated. He too felt that Dunlavin Arts Festival have been given little support, especially in their 40th year and stated that the €1,500.00 funding that they did receive needs to be revisited as there was a maximum amount of €5,000.00 that could have been allocated. Cllr Glennon was advised that The Arts Team would speak with Mr. Michael Nicholson to see if anything can be arranged.
- Cllr. Mullen thanked Jenny & Síle again for their presentation and asked that the Members be informed with contact details, location of position etc. of new staff for the project. He said the legacy of this project will be felt in this district and reiterated that the funding be spent wisely.

4. Update on forward planning for Blessington.

Ms. Kilkenny welcomed The Forward Planning Team to the meeting and thanked them for making themselves available to present the update to The Members.

Ms. Walsh thanked everyone for having them and proceeded with a summary of the Adopted County Development Plan and the stage it is at with the Judicial Review taken by Cairn Homes. As it is a live court case not all details could be discussed. Ms. Walsh informed The Members that The Minister has joined in the case and that the review of the National Planning Framework is due early 2024. The Members were also informed that there was no imminent review of housing figures.

Ms. Walsh then moved on to explain the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) and where Wicklow County Council is with the process. Ms. Walsh asked The Members to be really careful when requesting lands to be zoned in the upcoming Local Area Plan, as the owners

of lands, which are zoned and are not developed, will be subject to paying this tax. Lands put forward should be of benefit to society.

Ms. Harvey went through a detailed summary of the Local Area Plan process for the upcoming Blessington Plan and agreed to email a copy of the PowerPoint presentation to The Members.

Questions & Answers

- Cllr. Mullen thanked The Forward Planning Team for their presentation and the information provided and asked that the presentation be emailed to All Members ASAP. Cllr. Mullen opened the Q&A to The Members.
- Cllr. O'Neill thanked The Team for their presentation then stated that he felt that we are not any nearer to getting our plan for Blessington in place. He feels we do not have time on our side as planning applications are being granted in line with the old plan.
 - Cllr. O'Neill was advised that priority of plans had to be made and that The Forward Planning Team are progressing the Blessington Plan now.
 - Ms. Walsh also stated that there has to be a balance between what is needed from a plan, what a developer can be asked to provide and what Wicklow County Council should be providing. Ms. Walsh asked The Members to interact with The Forward Planning Team regarding the Plan, zoning etc.

Cllr. O'Neill then asked would The Forward Planning Team consult with The Members once the Draft Plan is produced by the Chief Executive.

- Cllr. O'Neill was assured that The Team would invite consultation with The Members.
- Cllr. Timmins stated that the National Planning Framework was out of date regarding the new census figures and wanted to know would the County Development Plan be revisited.
 - Cllr. Timmins was informed that yes variations can be made to the County Development Plan but that at present zoning within the plan is sufficient. More land that is needed is zoned.

Cllr. Timmins stated that the Residential Zoned Land Tax is a daft tax and that it makes no sense.

- Ms. Walsh reiterated how careful we need to be when zoning lands.
- Cllr. Glennon thanked Sorcha and her team. He proceeded to list the positive progress in the district, the housing of 44 families, planning stage of the inner relief road progressing well, stating the sooner it's up and running the better. Cllr. Glennon said that the transport infrastructure had to be addressed. He also stated that the Elected Members are one of the most important people in the process of the Local Area Plan as it is The Members that go in front of the public.

- Ms. Walsh agreed that The Members are the main people for the plan and the importance of an improvement of the transport infrastructure, mentioning the N81 Park & Ride.
- Cllr. Cronin asked that this level of engagement continues over the process of The Plan and reiterated the importance of transport being improved. Cllr. Cronin also highlighted the importance of social infrastructure and open space for schools. Cllr. Cronin also expressed that The Elected Members are the people who face the public and asked that when the consultation days happen that they have easy access for all.
- Cllr. Mullen agreed and said collectively they would come up with a suitable venue.
- Cllr. Blake asked in regards to the Residential Zoned Land Tax, if the lands are not serviced are they not included in the maps.
 - Cllr. Blake was advised that Uisce Éireann was involved in the production of the maps and that the tax related to serviced lands only.
- Cllr. Mullen thanked The Forward Planning Team again and said he looks forward to engaging with them further throughout the process.

5. Update on Baltinglass RRDF

- Mr. Graham's crew are on site and works are progressing nicely.
- Mr. Byrne informed The Members that:
 - Tender documents will be ready mid-end of June.
 - The plan is (A) McAllister - Quinn's - The Square, (B) Horan's - Lloyds - Pharmacy & (C) Germaine's - Fire Station.
 - A reduction of €400,000.00 has been made regarding paving, lighting & resurfacing.
 - On the outcome of further funding, specification will be reviewed.
 - The refurbishment of The Courthouse has been set aside for now.
 - The aim is to be ready to go in September.

Members Comments and Observations:

- Cllr. Timmins thanked Mr. Byrne and Mr. Graham for works to date. He requested that they keep the pressure on ARUP for the tender document and use what influence they can to pull the tender date forward if at all possible. Cllr. Timmins expressed that he is very interested to see what tender comes back. He agrees with the A,B,C approach but would like to see The Courthouse works carried out in tandem. He stated that works to The Courthouse roof need to be done ASAP.
 - Mr. Cullen informed The Members that a meeting is planned with Ms. Deirdre Whitfield to discuss The Courthouse.

- Cllr. Glennon stated that it is a scandal not having a court facility in the West of Wicklow.
- Cllr. O'Neill stated that the Dutchman's is an eye-sore and requested that a letter be sent to the Environment Section.
- A discussion was held regarding the Pedestrian Bridge and Pedestrian safety there on. The Members were informed that it needs to be dealt with under Active Travel and will be discussed at the pending meeting with Mr. Michael Flynn.
 - Mr. Cullen informed The Members that Baltinglass Community Park's application was successful under the Community Recognition Fund and was awarded €450,000.00 on which the crew are working away.

6. To consider Baltinglass Municipal District schedule of works.

- All Members received a copy of the Baltinglass Municipal District schedule of works previous to the meeting. They were informed by Mr. Cullen that with the increase in MD discretionary funding we are now comparable with other districts, which hadn't been the case in previous years something which was constantly highlighted by the members over the years
 - Cllr. Mullen thanked Ms. Kilkenny & Mr. Cullen for their work in achieving the increase.
 - The schedule of works was then proposed by Cllr. Timmins, seconded by Cllr. Blake and unanimously agreed.
 - Cllr. O'Neill expressed again, his frustration with the monies spent on the Public Toilet facility in Blessington. He asked that a permanent amenity be put in place. Cllr. Timmins suggested that a cost comparison be carried out, his suggestion was proposed by Cllr. O'Neill, Seconded by Cllr. Glennon and unanimously agreed.

7. 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:

- Cllr Timmins thanked the engineers for their reports. He reiterated the importance of getting the speed-limit reduced to 80km at Hollywood Crossroads as the present speed-limit of 100Km is too fast. He also commented that it is nice to see movement on the project at Hangman's Bend.

- Ms. Kilkenny informed The Members regarding the art work – steel structure for Knockroe Bends, which will definitely go ahead. The structure, which is a local submission, is under review. Ms. Kilkenny will keep The Members updated with any progress / decisions made.
- Cllr. Glennon requested that the engineers make contact with the new owners of the lands needed to progress the works on the footpath up to Palladius Park. He also wished to highlight Kiltegan Junction with the engineers again.
- Cllr. Blake asked could the works needed in Coolkenno be looked at again. He was advised by Mr. Graham that it will be reviewed in July to see if there is funding available.

8. Correspondence

- Mr. Cullen reminded The Members that Festival Funding applications must be submitted by the end of May.
- Mr. Cullen asked The Members to please have their achievement award nominations in to him ASAP. Nomination forms have been emailed to all, but are available from the office if needed.
- Mr. Cullen informed The Members that the Castel Maggiore group will be coming over in July 2023, details to follow.
- Mr Cullen advised the Members that representatives from Baltinglass Municipal District had been invited to attend twinning events scheduled to take place in Castel Maggiore on the 2nd – 4th June.
It was proposed by Cllr. Glennon, seconded by Cllr. Blake and unanimously agreed that two Councillors and a Council official should travel to the twinning event being held in Castel Maggiore in June 2023.

9. Any other business

- Cllr. O'Neill asked for an update on the Sam McAllister Monument, he would like to know if the treatment has worked.
 - Cllr. O'Neill would also like an update on the 70 houses built in Baltinglass and in particular the 22 affordable houses in the scheme.
 - Cllr. O'Neill requested an update on the Stratford Community Centre.
 - Ms. Kilkenny informed The Members that The Department of Children were interested in holding a briefing with The District Officials before the Section 183 goes before The Council. Cllr. Timmins thanked Ms. Kilkenny for the update but reiterated that he believes that the way the two sites were

chosen was flawed from the very beginning. Cllr. O'Neill stated that he believed that there were still issues with the water supply for Dunlavin.

10. Date of next meeting

Monday 26th June

The AGM / next Baltinglass Municipal District meeting will be held on the 26th June 2023.

Ms. Kilkenny apologised as she is unable to attend the next meeting and thanked Cllr. Mullen for his hard work, time and co-operation during his time as Cathaoirleach.

Mr. Graham apologised as he too will be unable to attend the next meeting for personal reasons. He also thanked Cllr. Mullen.

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

Signed: _____

CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed: _____

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated: _____