

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held on Zoom on 20th December 2021, at 10.30am

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

In Attendance: Mr. Marc Devereaux, A/District Engineer
Mr. Pat Byrne, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer
Mr. Liam Cullen, District Administrator
Ms. Andrea Connolly, Assistant Staff Officer
Mr. Michael Nicholson, Director of Services, CCSD
Mr. Brendan Martin, County Librarian
Ms. Christine Flood, Senior Executive Officer, Enterprise & Corp Services
Mr. Jason Mulhall, Blessington District Forum
Mr. Michael Doyle, Blessington District Forum

Apologies: Ms. Breege Kilkenny, District Manager

Cathaoirleach Cronin welcomed all and opened the meeting.

1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District meeting of Baltinglass dated 22nd November 2021.

Cllr. Glennon proposed the confirmation of the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District meeting of Baltinglass 22nd November 2021 and this was seconded by Cllr. Timmins.

2. Matters Arising.

There were no matters arising.

3. To consider Part 8 Application relating to Baltinglass Courthouse & Library.

Mr. Brendan Martin briefed the meeting on the proposed development of Baltinglass Courthouse and Library. He informed the members that the court services vacated the building in 2013 and since this departure there has been significant deterioration to the building structure particularly with mould and condensation. Following the submission of an RRDF application for the upgrade of Baltinglass Town Square, funding of €560,500 was awarded towards the upgrade of the courthouse. Following investigative works in Autumn 2020 it was found that the local granite in the building was destroyed beyond repair following the fire of 1922 with significant works required to both the roof and walls. DeBlacam & Meagher architects were appointed following the tender process and the proposed works and plans including the necessary changes are estimated at a cost of approximately €3.5 to €4 million. Mr. Martin advised the meeting that it was recommended that an application for increased funding through the RRDF be made but in early 2021 advice from the Department of Rural and Community Development was to reapply as a separate project and if unsuccessful the €560,500 would still be available. The proposed project would now be a four-part project to include a restored heritage centre on the ground floor, an open courtyard to a memorial garden, an adult library with a tiered balcony effect and a co-working space in the current roof area. The Part 8 application process ran from mid-September to the 3rd November and submissions had been made from the public and official bodies. Issues raised had been addressed by the Chief Executive in his report and Mr. Martin read through these issues and the Chief Executive's responses. He advised members that adoption of the Part 8 application would afford Wicklow County Council the opportunity to apply for increased funding under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and if successful would increase tourism to Baltinglass and bring a vibrancy to the town. Mr. Michael Nicholson stated that all considerations and recommendations have been taken on board and advised members that the options were to proceed as recommended, to proceed with amendments or to refuse. Cllr. O'Neill noted that the local community's views on this project should be given before he could vote as Baltinglass jail is an historic building in the town and asked if €560,000 is available for a new library is it worth spending more. Cllr. Timmins stated that this is an opportunity for investment in Baltinglass and should not be dragged out any longer. Cllr. Mullen queried if every area of the project is accessible to wheelchair users and Mr. Martin informed him that a lift has been proposed to include access to the top floor which will house the co-working hub. Cllr. Blake stated that he would like to see this project proceed and Cllr. Glennon stated he was in favour of the project. Cllr. O'Neill asked if the vote could be deferred until January as there would be no loss of money and the public's issues could be addressed. Mr. Liam Cullen, District Administrator, asked the members for their vote on this motion.

For	Against
Cllr. Blake	
Cllr. Cronin	
Cllr. Glennon	
Cllr. Mullen	
	Cllr. O’Neill
Cllr. Timmins	

Cllr. Timmins proposed this motion and Cllr. Blake seconded it.

4. To consider Roads Reports (national and non-national roads).

Following Mr. Dermot Graham’s presentation of the non-national roads report the members raised a number of queries. Cllr. Blake queried if work projects are being carried over into 2022 would the resources be carried over also. He also questioned if there was any update from the ESB on works at Beechwood Drive. Mr. Graham replied that all remaining works would be completed early in 2022 and he had been in contact with the ESB regarding the damaged pole at Beechwood Drive.

Mr. Byrne, Senior Executive Engineer, advised the meeting that a new surface course was relayed at Knockroe and following a stage four safety audit more items have been raised and these works will be completed in the New Year. He also advised the members that TII are currently reviewing the barrier work on the N81 and this involves the repair and maintenance of existing barriers. TII are also carrying out upgrades on the lighting at the Lamb Junction and Hollywood with lights being changed to LED lighting. Cllr. O’Neill noted the issue of speed limit reviews had arisen at the previous meeting and asked if there had been any update. He also stated that we are now into winter weather and suggested that this year during bad weather a temporary crew be put in place to look after local rural roads. Mr. Graham informed the meeting that a project was launched last week by the Minister for Transport and operated by DTTAS. The Speed Limit Appeals Procedure allows members of the public to object and appeal existing speed limits contained within a Local Authority’s current Speed Limit Bye-laws. This new process will highlight certain speed limits which are considered inappropriate and require investigation. Mr. Graham added that an internal speed limit review is ongoing at present in Wicklow and will seek an update from the Senior Engineer.

5. To consider a proposal from a Blessington Twinning group to formally twin Blessington with O’Neill City, Nebraska, USA.

Marc Devereaux, Senior Engineer Environment, attending in Ms. Kilkenny’s absence, informed the meeting of the provisions in which twinning can take place under the Local Government Act. Also joining the meeting was Ms. Christine Flood, Senior Executive Office, Enterprise & Corporate Services. Cllr. O’Neill gave a brief history on the relationship between Blessington and O’Neill city and the contacts that had been made through the secondary schools in both towns. He stated that this issue had been raised at a number of meetings in the past and presentations given from the Blessington Twinning Group. He advised that the elected members gave their friendship and support of this twinning proposal at the October Baltinglass MD meeting in 2017. He informed the meeting that he was unaware that a formal agreement could be made and only a community agreement is in place currently. He proposed that Blessington formally twin with O’Neill City and stated that this twinning agreement has already been formally completed from the O’Neill side. Cllr. Glennon seconded this proposal and noted that this has been ongoing for a number of years and should be fully ratified. He added he would fully support other twinings also and has checked the status of the Coollattin connection and advised that there is a formal twinning agreement in place and would hope to see this proposal get the same status. Ms. Flood advised members that €3,000 is allocated to the Baltinglass MD for twinning. She advised that there is a need for some formal documentation and although very supportive of the work that goes into setting up these links she stressed the importance of identifying the cultural and sporting links, the membership aims and objectives of the group and the costs involved. She raised concerns that certain specifics must be put in place prior to twinning and voiced her concern on voting on this proposal without this paperwork. She read out Section 75 of the Local Government Act which stated that “A local authority shall not enter into an arrangement under subsection (1) unless, having had regard to the following matters, it is satisfied that the arrangement is justified:

- (a) the benefits likely to accrue to its administrative area and the local community
- (b) the social, cultural and general interests of its administrative area and the local community, and
- (c) the total cost involved.

Cllr. O’Neill stated that visits have already taken place and there were no costs involved. Cllr. Timmins suggested an amendment to the proposal to include “costs must be approved by Baltinglass Municipal District”. Cllr. O’Neill seconded this amendment and Cllr. Glennon concurred with Cllr. Timmins that costs can be further developed at future meetings and asked for a vote to be taken. Cllr. Mullen stated that as the district does not have a large town council and with a very small budget in place he agreed with Cllr. Timmins suggestion and to proceed with the vote. Cllr. Cronin asked the

members if they wanted to proceed with the vote and to include the following amendment to the proposal “the budget of twinning will operate within the parameters of the Baltinglass Municipal District”.

For	Against
Cllr. Blake	
Cllr. Cronin	
Cllr. Glennon	
Cllr. Mullen	
Cllr. O’Neill	
Cllr. Timmins	

Cllr. O’Neill proposed this motion with amendments and Cllr. Glennon seconded it.

6. To consider a proposal from a town in Italy, Castel Maggiore, to formally twin with Blessington – presentation on twinning proposal to be made by Blessington District Forum.

Mr. Jason Mulhall, Blessington District Forum, thanked members and the District Administrator for the information on the twinning process and advised that this is a proposal to explore twinning with Castel Maggiore and not a formal request. He advised the meeting that an invitation was extended to Blessington District Forum in November 2019 to twin with Castel Maggiore and the Forum propose to explore how this can be expedited. He added that the process has started and both towns have historic similarities and populations. Following a presentation from Mr. Michael Doyle of the Blessington District Forum Cllr. O’Neill welcomed the possibility of twinning and noted it would be of benefit to Blessington. Cllr. Timmins thanked both for their presentation and offered his support to this initiative. He noted that twinings are generally driven by individuals and relationships and can foster growth and shared cultures between towns and are a great benefit to young people. All members fully supported this initiative and welcomed the opportunity to work with the Blessington District Forum to progress this proposal.

7. Correspondence

Mr. Liam Cullen, District Administrator, advised the members that a meeting had been arranged with the Minister for Transport on the N81 and this would take place tomorrow at 3pm via Zoom. He also advised that following the announcement that €100,000 has been allocated for Blessington to support the development of a masterplan for its future development and submissions are welcomed from the members.

7. Any other business.

Cllr. Glennon raised concerns that with no court service in West Wicklow and a new Garda Plan launched, there will be no Superintendent in the area and the traffic corps will be based in Baltinglass. He stated that this is not acceptable and should be a concern for all.

Cllr. O'Neill expressed his condolences on the deaths of Liam Kavanagh and Margaret O'Reilly and wished to extend his sympathies to both families. Cllr. Cronin extended sympathies to Billy Leigh following the death of his brother at the weekend. Both Cllr. Blake and Cllr. Timmins wished to be associated with the expression of sympathy to the Kavanagh family on the death of Liam, former TD and MEP.

There being no other business the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cronin, concluded the meeting and wished all a merry Christmas and thanked Marc Devereaux for attending the meeting.

Signed: _____

CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed: _____

DISTRICT ADMINSTRATOR

Dated: _____