

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held on Zoom on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 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:** Ms. Breege Kilkenny, District Manager  
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  
Ms. Aisling Hubbard, Sports Partnership

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 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021.**

Cllr. Mullen proposed the confirmation of the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District meeting of Baltinglass 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and this was seconded by Cllr. Blake.

**2. Matters Arising.**

Cllr. O'Neill raised concerns that the matters raised at the previous meeting regarding the lack of permanent public toilets in the district had not been addressed in the minutes and noted that this was an important issue and needed to be progressed. Cllr. Cronin queried if more information was required on this issue or could it be raised at the next meeting. Ms. Kilkenny, District Manager, advised the meeting that the issues with the public convenience in Blessington are under investigation

and an update will be provided at the next meeting. Cllr. O'Neill proposed this issue be included as an item on the agenda for the next Baltinglass MD meeting.

Cllr. O'Neill congratulated Blessington GAA on their recent win in the Leinster Senior Football Championship and wished them well in the next round against Naas GAA. Cllr. Mullen congratulated Tinahely Ladies GAA, Knockananna Junior B and Knockananna Camogie teams on their recent success. Both Cllr. Blake and Cllr. Cronin added their congratulations.

### **3. To receive a presentation on the Masterplan for the Burgage lands, Blessington from Mr. Michael Nicholson, Director of Services, CCSD.**

Mr. Michael Nicholson presented members with a draft of the masterplan for 12 hectares of land at Burgage which were purchased by Wicklow County Council in 2007. He informed the meeting that Wicklow County Council have been working with the Community Pool for West Wicklow on their campaign for a swimming pool in Blessington but no site has been located so far. He advised that consultants had drawn up a draft plan for the use of these lands at Burgage with six options available which he outlined to the meeting. The first option is a multi-purpose sports facility and would include a crèche, outdoor pitches, a small retail unit and industrial units. Mr. Nicholson briefed the members on the other five options available but some do not comply with the County Development Plan and would not be viable options. He advised that the first option would be the preferred choice with regards to zoning. The next stage is to finish the consultation with planners and finalise the initial design. Cllr. Mullen stated that this project will impact on the town and has huge scope to local communities and stressed that community consultation is key to this project. He noted that car parking issues at the greenway had been raised at a recent meeting and also stated that housing should be an important part of this project. Cllr. Timmins thanked Mr. Nicholson for his presentation and welcomed the draft plan. He added that discussions had already taken place regarding the development of 106 houses in the Burgage area and queried if further housing was planned. He also questioned what the plans were for one section of the site as it was quite hilly and what format the consultation will take. Mr. Nicholson replied that the hilly section of the site could accommodate access to the greenway rather than developing as it is a quite steep section. The consultation process will include notices put on display in the district offices. Cllr. Glennon stated that option two is his preferred option which includes office units rather than industrial units and noted that this project is a public facility rather than being built to enhance any industry. He also raised concerns on the proposal to put traffic lights on bridges and noted this may cause problems. He agreed with Cllr. Mullen on the issue of lack of car parking. Cllr. O'Neill raised concerns that there was no mention of a graveyard in any of the options or facilities for the local soccer club who currently have to travel to Kildare to train. He added that the 2019 town plan was implemented but has not been looked at yet. He stressed the importance of consultation with the community in order get all views. Cllr. Cronin stated that

although this project is still at the very early stages consultation is extremely important for the community. She queried if a timeline when a plan will be decided on and agreed that the proposal of the stop and go system on the greenway needs to be addressed and an alternative solution found. Mr. Nicholson replied that all concerns will be taken on board. He advised members that the inclusion of a graveyard in the plans would be poor use of land when better sites are available. He added that this site cost approximately €300,000 per acre and this needs to be recouped. He informed the meeting that the design will be finalised early in the New Year, there will be lots of pitches available and all clubs will be catered for. He advised the members to email any queries or concerns they had and he will follow up.

#### **4. To receive a presentation on Healthy Wicklow from Ms. Aisling Hubbard, WCC, Sports Partnership Officer.**

Ms. Hubbard presented the meeting with a report on the Healthy Wicklow initiative which was rolled out in Blessington. The Healthy Blessington project ran programmes for all age groups but the target group was older adults and people with disabilities. There were a number of online classes and Healthy Blessington ran the first Buggyfit classes for on new mums. Ms. Hubbard informed the meeting that a number of health & wellbeing signs were erected around the town in collaboration with Blessington Town Forum and a healthy eating course was rolled out and promoted in two primary schools in Blessington and it is hoped these will be introduced to more schools in the future. There were four inclusive adventure camps ran in Russborough during the summer for children who could not attend mainstream camps with these being heavily subsidised and volunteers from Blessington GAA keeping running costs down. Healthy Wicklow now hope to focus on the south west of the county, Carnew, Shillelagh and Tinahely areas, and hope to set up active communities to support a range of activities in these areas.

Following Ms. Hubbard's presentation Cllr. Mullen stated that mental health care has been very important during Covid and welcomed the proposal of bring Healthy Wicklow to the south of the county. He added that both Kare in Tinahely and Carnew Community Care would be ideal locations. Cllr. Blake noted he would like to also include the Chesire Home as a location and stated that mental health is an issue within the county. He noted that it would be a good time to reactivate a presentation on mental health care within the county as West Wicklow and Baltinglass area linked to Kildare services. Cllr. Cronin supported Cllr. Blake's proposal and thanked Ms. Hubbard for her presentation. She stated it was great to see these programmes in action. Cllr. O'Neill thanked Ms. Kilkenny and engineers in the district for works on the new footpaths in the area.

## **5. To consider Roads Reports (national and non-national roads).**

Copies of both the national and non-national roads reports had been distributed to members prior to the meeting. Mr. Byrne, Senior Executive Engineer, advised the meeting that all scheduled works on the N81 have been completed with the exception of surfacing works at Knockroe Bends. The contractor had identified issues with the road surface and will be removing the surface course this week and relaying. He also advised members of damage to mesh fencing at the Lamb junction and advised these repairs will be completed this week. Cllr. Timmins noted it was good to see these improvements being completed at Knockroe and queried if there were any reports back from the TII surveys on the N81 and also if there is any solution to the dust and dirt on the N81 north of Blessington. Cllr. Glennon stated it was great to see works being completed on the N81 but it is no substitute for an upgrade. He asked if there were any updates on a location for the bus stop. Cllr. O'Neill raised the issue of the deterioration of the road surface on Knockieran bridge and asked if the ESB had been in contact with an update. He also raised concerns on the proposal of an access route through Woodleigh Estate to a proposed development of fifty six houses located behind Woodleigh estate. He advised that Woodleigh Estate is a very busy housing estate with narrow roads and a lot of children playing. He added that the eventual entrance to this new development will be from the proposed inner relief road but the contractor will require access for the build through Woodleigh estate with a lot of heavy machinery using this route. He noted that Woodleigh residents have no issue with the development of new houses but would rather a different access route was found. Mr. Byrne addressed the concerns raised by the members. He advised that the report by TII on the N81 has been completed and he would be happy to go through when required. On the issue of dirt on the N81, he advised that it is not practical to sweep a national road every day and there is no budget available to cover these costs. He added that he had met with the safety officer from TII and was positive that a park and ride facility could progress but would require more funding. He advised that he is awaiting paperwork from ESB advising that Wicklow County Council are responsible for maintaining the surfaces of the bridges and advised funding could be provided from the roads programme to cover these works but if completed Wicklow County Council would be responsible for these surfaces. He stated that the issue at Woodleigh estate would be a planning issue and couldn't comment on it.

Following Mr. Dermot Graham's presentation of the non-national roads report the members raised a number of queries. Cllr. Blake queried if there was any consultation with Carlow County Council with regard to road gritting during the winter months as the R747 crossed county boundaries a number of times. He also queried if there was any update on the recycling bins in Kiltegan which had been located in County Carlow and have since been removed. Cllr. Timmins asked if the old graveyard at Kiltegan could be looked at as works were required. Cllr. O'Neill asked for an update on the speed limit review and Cllr. Cronin raised concerns regarding roadmarking on the Ballytore road. Mr. Graham replied that there is a certain amount of communication with Carlow County Council with

regards to roadworks taking place and he added that they do get the gritting notifications that are sent. On the issue of the recycling bins in Kiltegan he noted that this is primarily an environment issue but would ask them to reassess following a request from Kiltegan Pride of Place. He continued that white lining will be addressed over the next few months but currently temperatures are too low to complete. Following Cllr. O'Neill's query on the speed limit review, Mr. Graham advised that these have been sent to Michael Flynn, Senior Roads Engineer, and he will follow up and get an update for the next meeting. Cllr. Cronin asked if the new roads programme has been decided and Mr. Graham advised that the three year roads programme was compiled at the end of October and based on PCSI pavement index roads are ranked according to condition. He added that funding is based on this years budget of 2.35 million. Mr. Byrne explained that the three years roads programme is not set in stone and can be changed according to funding available.

## **6. Correspondence**

Mr. Liam Cullen, District Administrator, advised the meeting that the Blessington District Forum had received an invitation to twin from a town in northern Italy, Castel Maggiore. The Blessington District Forum have formally requested that this proposal be included on the agenda for the next Baltinglass Municipal District meeting in December. Cllr. O'Neill raised concerns that the Cathaoirleach had met up with three people from the Blessington District Forum and the District Administrator to discuss this matter and in his opinion this was ethically incorrect. Cllr. Cronin informed the meeting that a community group had asked her about the twinning process and as she was unaware of the procedures she sought clarification on this matter. Cllr. O'Neill noted that Blessington town is clearly twinned with O'Neill city in Nebraska which was carried out in the proper manner and fully supported by Baltinglass Municipal District. He stated he did not like the format in which this twinning proposal was carried out and stated that the standing orders are to be abided by. Cllr. Cronin stated that some members seem to think it is okay to speak over the Cathaoirleach and respect for the Cathaoirleach should be shown regardless of gender, age or height. Cllr. Mullen noted that he had no issue with the Cathaoirleach meeting up with community groups and did not see any ethical issue. Ms. Kilkenny advised the members that the twinning process is a reserved function of the elected members and any group can present with an additional twinning proposal. Cllr. Glennon raised concerns that Blessington is not officially twinned with O'Neill City but has no problem with the forum giving a presentation and has no issue with twinning both towns with Blessington. Cllr. Blake stated he had no issue with Blessington Forum giving a presentation at the next meeting. He noted that continued support has been given to Coollattin Canadian group but that no official twinning has taken place and to his knowledge Blessington is not officially twinned with any town. Cllr. O'Neill stated he has no problem with the request but the process in which it was conducted. The

Cathaoirleach stated that she is happy for the Blessington Forum to give a presentation at the next meeting.

**7. Any other business.**

Cllr. Mullen raised the issue of ten public lights in Knockananna which have not been turned on. He stated that this is now the third winter without these lights. Mr. Graham advised that these lights had been funded through the Clár programme and he had met with engineers from ESB who advised that they need to change some of the poles. He advised he will contact ESB again in order to progress these works. Cllr. Blake requested if the pole in Beechdale, Tinahely that had been damaged can be followed up on also.

There being no other business the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cronin, concluded the meeting.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CATHAOIRLEACH**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DISTRICT ADMINSTRATOR**

**Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_