

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held via Zoom on 26th July 2021, at 10.30 am

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

In Attendance: Ms. Breege Kilkenny, District Manager
Mr. Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer
Mr. Liam Cullen, District Administrator
Ms. Andrea Connolly, Assistant Staff Officer
Mr. Tony Quirke, Executive Engineer, TWES

Apologies: Mr. Pat Byrne, District Engineer

Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Cronin welcomed all to the July Ordinary Meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District.

1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 28th June 2021.

Cllr. Blake proposed the confirmation of the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 28th June 2021 and this was seconded by Cllr. Glennon.

2. To confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 28th June 2021.

Cllr. Mullen proposed the confirmation of the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 28th June 2021 and this was seconded by Cllr. O'Neill.

3. Matters arising.

Cllr. Blake raised concerns at the proposal to install speed ramps on Kelly's hill in Tinahely following a number of car accidents at this location. He noted that a lot of agricultural traffic use this route and considered speed ramps a last resort solution. Mr. Graham, Executive Engineer, advised that a survey had been completed on Kelly's hill and the build up of speed was a factor. He continued that other options being looked at are driver feedback signs or the option of diverting traffic downhill through Lugduff or the School Road. Cllr. Mullen added that there have been several accidents on this route and speeding is the issue. He added that agricultural traffic should be encouraged to use the School Road and that safety is paramount on a route with heavy footfall. Mr. Graham noted that speed ramps and a one way system were options being considered and there were a number of issues to be teased out. He added that speed ramps are very effective at reducing speed and modifications can be made to them to suit.

Cllr. O'Neill sought clarification on the details of improvement works to Blessington Town Square following the allocation of funding from the National Transport Authority. He noted that there had been no mention of lighting at the previous presentation from NTA. Mr. Graham advised that works will be completed on an open public space and some lighting is included as an aesthetic feature and to include good visual lighting for pedestrians.

4. To receive an update on Baltinglass Town Park and Square.

The Cathaoirleach introduced Tony Quirke, Executive Engineer with TWES, to give an update on Baltinglass Town Park and Square. Mr. Quirke advised members that the part 8 application for the refurbishment of Baltinglass Town Square includes proposals for the provision of widened footpaths, public lighting, planting and an upgrade of the existing parking provision along with an extension to upgrade footpaths as far as the KARE centre. Minor refurbishment works at Baltinglass Town Park will include repairs to the existing boardwalk and fencing along the river Slaney and an upgrade to the playground area. This will also include wild planting to

improve biodiversity in the area. Cllr. Timmins thanked Mr. Quirke for his presentation and asked for copies of the updated drawings to be circulated to members. He added that it was great to see the decision made to extend works out as far as the KARE centre but noted it was two years ago that this funding had been awarded and stressed how important it was for the public to see the bulk of this funding being spent on facilities. He also noted how visibility of the river Slaney from the boardwalk was important and queried if works could start on the Town Park before winter. Cllr. Mullen advised members that he had attended a Baltinglass Town Forum meeting recently and the issue of fencing in the Town Park had arisen. He added he was glad of the update and willingness shown to consult with the members and the Baltinglass Town Forum and would like to see this kept up. Cllr. O'Neill echoed Cllr. Timmins' concerns and asked for a commencement date. Cllr. Glennon stated it was time to see some movement on this project and queried if an application had been made for extra funding to include works on the footbridge. Ms. Breege Kilkenny, District Manager, advised members that Margaret Hartnett had made an application for funding for the footbridge and the extension of works to the KARE facility and consultation has moved forward but is waiting on confirmation that a Part 8 is not required.

Mr. Quirke addressed the concerns raised by members and advised that the viewing platforms from the boardwalk will be maintained as much as possible. On the issue of when works would commence, he advised that tenders will be issued in September or October and contractors appointed in late 2021. Following concerns raised by Cllr. Mullen on the fencing of the Town Park, he advised that there will be access points for Garda inspections included in these works. He advised that Ms. Hartnett had made an application for extra funding for the footbridge to include the extended works to the KARE centre. There has been no confirmation on this yet but the design element for the extended works will be ready to go and in place.

Cllr. O'Neill asked if the members could get the views of Ms. Mai Quaide, Baltinglass Town Forum, who was in attendance. The Cathaoirleach asked Mr. Liam Cullen, District Administrator, if this could be allowed and he advised that normally a proposal for the suspension of the Standing Orders at the beginning of the meeting would take place. Cllr. Cronin noted that as the agenda was short a member of the Baltinglass Town Forum could speak. Mr. John Vernon joined the meeting and advised that the Forum are of the understanding that funding has been approved for this project but they would very much like to see works commence. He added that the people of Baltinglass are getting frustrated and would like to see

funding being spent on works and not on consultants. Ms. Mai Quaide also joined the meeting and advised that the forum had completed a survey on the bridge and how dangerous it was. She continued that they would be very grateful if the application submitted was successful. Cllr. Cronin thanked Mr. Quirke for his update and for his clarifications on the Town Park and the boardwalk. She added that communication was a key factor on these projects and it was good to see the application submitted for the proposed footbridge but queried when funding would be confirmed and a cost for the footbridge. Mr. Quirke advised that the application had been submitted in May but no confirmation has been received yet. He added that a feasibility study had been completed with the total cost of works on the footbridge estimated at between 1.4 and 1.9 million euro.

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

Mr. Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer, presented a report to the meeting on non national and national roads and copies of same were distributed to the members. Cllr. Timmins raised concerns about the bridge in Baltinglass and noted that a survey had been completed a number of years ago but no works were carried out. He stated that people are getting fed up and expressed hopes that the application for funding of the footbridge will be successful. He added that this junction is now the most serious safety issue in the district and needs progress rather than discussion. He also welcomed the update that a study will be carried out by TII on the section of the N81 from Annalecky to Baltinglass to identify future projects along this section of the N81. Cllr. O'Neill also welcomed improvements on the N81 but noted many improvements are needed north of Blessington. He highlighted the need for a reduction of the speed limit at Cross Chapel where a number of fatalities have occurred and the increase of HGV's from farms and quarries north of Blessington over the summer months. Cllr. Glennon noted it was good to see road improvements at Hollywood but the upgrade of the N81 is still badly needed. He also enquired about an update on the speed review which he added needs to be addressed urgently. Mr. Graham advised members that a feasibility study had been carried out on the N81 and R747 junction a number of years ago by TII and NTA and a test run had been completed but nothing since and this issue may benefit from more lobbying. He stated that he would raise the issue of the speed limit review with the roads section in Wicklow again. Cllr. Cronin echoed the concerns raised by her colleagues on the need for a footbridge in Baltinglass and the speed limit review at Hollywood junction. Cllr. Timmins queried when footpath works at Edward Street will commence and Mr. Graham replied that works will start in the next few weeks. Ms.

Kilkenny advised members that the bus stop and speed review are priorities on the N81 and thanked Cllr. Glennon and Cllr. Timmins for their contribution towards the consultant's reports on the bus stop.

Following an update on the non national roads reports the members raised a number of queries. Cllr. Mullen queried when the restoration improvement schemes would be completed in the Tinahely area and if caution signs could be erected in the Deerpark area for horse users. He also enquired if safety on the R725 at Coolkenno could be addressed along with line marking in some areas of the district. Cllr. Timmins enquired if there was any update on proposed works at Talbotstown school and asked if anything could be done about the lights at Lathaleere which have not been turned on yet. Mr. Graham informed members that the schedule of restoration improvement works depends on the successful contractor's programme of works and at present six tenders have been awarded in the Tinahely area. He continued that safety on the R725 could be improved with the addition of extra signage and road markings in the district will be addressed once all resurfacing works have been completed. On the issue of lighting at Lathaleere, Mr. Graham advised members that he had been in contact with the ESB who are not happy with the proximity of lighting and this now needs to be amended by the contractor. Cllr. Blake informed members that a section of the R725 in Coolkenno was resurfaced a number of years ago resulting in flooding to a property and queried if this issue could be investigated along with drainage works in Coolafancy which were causing a similar problem. He noted the allocation of funding for the Local Improvement Schemes and asked if any available funding could be sourced for works on regional roads. Cllr. O'Neill proposed writing to the Minister for Transport to change the protocol on how these schemes are dealt with as currently one resident on the lane can stop the improvement scheme going ahead when all other residents are in favour. Mr. Graham replied that flooding and drainage issues at Coolkenno and Coolafancy will be resolved in the coming months although neither are included in the drainage grant programme. He continued that the Department of Rural Development have come back with extra funding for LIS schemes which are privately owned and full consent is required from all stakeholders which can be a major issue as highlighted by Cllr. O'Neill. Cllr. Glennon raised concerns that members of the public are incensed at being given parking tickets in Hollywood while attending mass and the issue of parking in Hollywood needs to be addressed. Cllr. O'Neill asked for an update on parking at Burgage and if double yellow lines are being put in place. Ms. Kilkenny replied that Pat Byrne had been working on this issue and officially yellow lines cannot be inserted unless byelaws are in place although an area opposite the graveyard is being looked at and public

consultation will be required along with cutting back of hedges etc. Cllr. Mullen raised concerns over parking tickets being issued in Knockananna recently due to a reduction in parking spaces and Mr. Graham replied that parking enforcement is a Garda issue and alternative parking spaces are available in the playground area. The Cathaoirleach advised that she would raise these parking concerns at the next Joint Policing Committee meeting.

5. Correspondence

Mr. Liam Cullen advised members that correspondence had been received from Donal McCormack, Chairman of Blessington Allotments, enquiring about an update on a site for allotments which he would respond to directly.

6. Any other business

Cllr. Blake raised concerns over the issue of insurance cover in playgrounds which had been highlighted recently and noted that repair works are required in both Carnew and Tinahely playgrounds. He added that he hopes to see discretionary funding spent this year and asked if the issues raised by Blessington Tidy Towns in a recent email could be addressed. Cllr. O'Neill advised members that a group had been in contact with him in relation to organising a Halfway to St. Patrick's Day Festival in Blessington depending on Covid restrictions. He described the event as a weekend of traditional music and songs, a parade etc and would take place in mid September. Cllr. O'Neill stressed that the organising group are very conscious of current restrictions and proposed that funding of €2,000 from the Baltinglass MD Festival Budget could go towards the running of the event. Cllr. Glennon seconded this proposal on the condition that the event is compliant with Covid regulations. The Cathaoirleach stated that no events were being organised through Wicklow County Council at present and Ms. Kilkenny advised that Government advice must be followed and no plans can be made until after these restrictions are lifted. Cllr. Mullen echoed Cllr. Blake's concerns on the spending of discretionary budgets and stated it was important to move on with these projects. He also advised that it was his understanding that the motion on spending of festival funds needed to be included on the agenda before a decision can be made. Cllr. O'Neill stated that he had spoken to the Cathaoirleach about this proposal and asked for it to be included as an item on the agenda. Cllr. Cronin replied that she had advised Cllr. O'Neill that no events could be organised in the midst of a pandemic. Cllr. Blake stated that a written application for funding by the organising committee has to be

submitted before a decision can be made. The Cathaoirleach asked for clarification on this and Mr. Cullen advised members that under normal circumstances a request is included as an item on the agenda and would need approval from members. He informed members that currently there is a total budget of €12,000 in the Baltinglass MD Festival Fund with €10,000 allocated for Christmas Lighting applications with a balance of €2,000 available. Cllr. Cronin asked that the organising group submit an application for funding in writing and with more details of the event. She added that Baltinglass MD are happy to support all community groups and their endeavours. Mr. Cullen advised members that he has been liaising directly with Blessington Tidy Towns in resolving the issue with the supply of bins in the area and would have an update for the next meeting.

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

Signed: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed: _____
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR