

MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING (HYBRID) OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 8TH MAY 2023, COMMENCING 2.00 PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS T. ANNESLEY CATHAOIRLEACH, M. BARRY, J. BEHAN, V. BLAKE, S. BOURKE, M. CORRIGAN, A. CRONIN, S. CULLEN, E. DOYLE, G. DUNNE, P. FITZGERALD, A. FLYNN KENNEDY, T. FORTUNE, P. GLENNON, M. KAVANAGH, P. KENNEDY, P. LEONARD, G. MCMANUS, J. MULLEN, M. MURPHY, D. O'BRIEN, P. O'BRIEN, R. O'CONNOR, G. O'NEILL, L. SCOTT, J. SNELL, S. STOKES, E. TIMMINS, G. WALSH AND I. WINTERS (30)

APOLOGIES

CLLRS. A. FERRIS AND D. MITCHELL (2)

IN ATTENDANCE:

**MS. E. O'GORMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
MS. L. GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MS. B. KILKENNY, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MS. L. EARLS, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. J. LANE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. M. NICHOLSON, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MS. D. KENNEDY, LAW AGENT
MR. B. GLEESON, HEAD OF FINANCE
MS. H. PURCELL, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR
MS. B. MCCARTHY, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT
MR. J. BOWES, SENIOR ENGINEER
MS. H. FALLON, SENIOR ENGINEER
MR. M. FLYNN, SENIOR ENGINEER
MR. D. MARNANE, A/SENIOR ENGINEER
MR. M. DEVEREUX, SENIOR ENGINEER
MS. S. WALSH, SENIOR PLANNER
MS. J. CARROLL, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. C. FLOOD, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. T. O'BRIEN, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. D. WHITFIELD, TOWN REGENERATION OFFICER
MR. T. HUGHES, IS PROJECT LEADER
MR. G. MURPHY, IS TECHNICAL SUPPORT OFFICER
MS. T. BYRNE, ASSISTANT STAFF OFFICER
MS. C. HENDRICK, CLERICAL OFFICER
MS. J. KELLEHER, DIRECTOR, MERMAID ARTS CENTRE
MR. J. FITZPATRICK, CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER, AN GARDA SIOCHÁNA**

At the commencement of the meeting a roll call was taken. The Meetings Administrator advised of meetings etiquette for online meetings and that the press and some members of the public were also present.

Votes of Sympathy

Elected Members passed a vote of sympathy to the families of the late Mr. Peter Doyle, Mr. Jim Byrne, Mr. Declan Power, Mr. Sean Keane and Mr. Sean Killoran. A minutes silence was observed for the deceased.

Request for Suspension of Standing Orders:- The Meetings Administrator advised that two requests for suspension of standing orders had been submitted in advance of the meeting. In accordance with the protocol adopted the requests were read to the meeting as proposed and seconded:-

1. Cllr. P. Glennon, seconded by Cllr. E. Timmins requested a suspension of standing orders to discuss the following:

‘That this Council condemns the failure of AIB to reinstate cash handling services at the Blessington Branch of AIB, having reversed their policy in respect of cashless branches (70 branches) throughout Ireland in July 2022. The Blessington Branch went cashless in December 2021 as a pilot of the cashless branch policy then being pursued by AIB and, thankfully now abandoned by senior management. The situation in Blessington is now particularly serious as there is no banking service with cash handling services available since the closure of Ulster Bank on the 21st April 2023. This Council now calls on the Minister for Finance to encourage AIB senior management to restore cash handling services at the Blessington AIB branch as a matter of urgency’.

It was agreed by all to have a discussion on the topic at 4.30 p.m.

2. Cllr. P. Fitzgerald, seconded by Cllr. P. Kennedy requested a suspension of standing orders to discuss the following:

‘The cancellation of the 133 Bus Service from Arklow to Wicklow. The 133 Bus Service from Wicklow Town to Busárus has been enhanced to 143 departures each way every week’.

It was agreed by all to have a discussion on the topic at 4.30 p.m.

ITEM NO. 1

To confirm and sign minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Wicklow County Council held on Monday 3rd April 2023.

It was proposed by Cllr. P. O'Brien, seconded by Cllr. J. Snell and agreed to confirm and sign minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Wicklow County Council held on Monday 3rd April 2023.

ITEM NO. 2

To consider the disposal of 0.0086 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Blackditch, Co. Wicklow being land adjoining property 28 Seamount Drive, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow comprised in Folio No. WW28577F to Alan and Michelle Colgan of 28 Seamount Drive, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow

It was proposed by Cllr. S. Stokes, seconded by Cllr. G. Walsh and agreed to consider the disposal of 0.0086 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Blackditch, Co. Wicklow being land adjoining property 28 Seamount Drive, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow comprised in Folio No. WW28577F to Alan and Michelle Colgan of 28 Seamount Drive, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow, as set out in statutory notice circulated.

ITEM NO. 3

To consider the disposal of 0.0321Ha or thereabouts in the townland of Powerscourt Demesne, Co. Wicklow comprised in Folio No. WW4484 Co. Wicklow being the property known as 66 Kilgarron Park, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow by Transfer Order to Ms. Kathleen Keogh and Mr. Leo Keogh of 66 Kilgarron Park, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow, the persons entitled to the freehold interest in the property

It was proposed by Cllr. M. Corrigan, seconded by Cllr. R. O'Connor and agreed to consider the disposal of 0.0321Ha or thereabouts in the townland of Powerscourt Demesne, Co. Wicklow comprised in Folio No. WW4484 Co. Wicklow being the property known as 66 Kilgarron Park, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow by Transfer Order to Ms. Kathleen Keogh and Mr. Leo Keogh of 66 Kilgarron Park, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow, the persons entitled to the freehold interest in the property, as set out in statutory notice circulated.

ITEM NO. 4

To consider the disposal of 0.0700Ha or thereabouts in the townland of Blessington, Co. Wicklow comprised in Folio No. WW726F Co. Wicklow by Transfer Order to Ms. Bridie Kavanagh, the person entitled to the freehold interest being the property known as 10 Troopersfield, Blessington, Co. Wicklow

It was proposed by Cllr. G. O'Neill, seconded by Cllr. P. Glennon and agreed to consider the disposal of 0.0700Ha or thereabouts in the townland of Blessington, Co. Wicklow comprised in Folio No. WW726F Co. Wicklow by Transfer Order to Ms. Bridie Kavanagh, the person entitled to the freehold interest being the property known as 10 Troopersfield, Blessington, Co. Wicklow, as set out in statutory notice circulated.

ITEM NO. 5

To consider the disposal of 0.230Ha or thereabouts in the townland of Humphreystown, Co. Wicklow being the property known as Hampton Wood, Humphreystown, Blessington, Co. Wicklow to Mr. Damien Reynor who is now disposing of the property

It was proposed by Cllr. G. O'Neill, seconded by Cllr. J. Snell and agreed to consider the disposal of 0.230Ha or thereabouts in the townland of Humphreystown, Co. Wicklow being the property known as Hampton Wood, Humphreystown, Blessington, Co. Wicklow to Mr. Damien Reynor who is now disposing of the property, as set out in statutory notice circulated.

ITEM NO. 6

To note the Annual Financial Statement 2022 and to approve by resolution (i) additional net expenditure in excess of budget in accordance with Section 104(7) of the Local Government Act 2001 and (ii) additional transfers to and from capital in excess of budget.

Mr. B. Gleeson, Head of Finance gave an overview of the Annual Financial Statement 2022 as follows:

- The council faced a number of economic challenges and uncertainties during 2022, including the ongoing war in Ukraine, high inflation and energy costs, and increasing interest rates.
- Despite these significant challenges, the council's overall financial position remained quite strong at the end of 2022. The total expenditure incurred in the revenue account after transfers was €134 million, which generated a surplus of €349,000 and reduced overall general reserve deficit to €939,000 at year end.

- The capital account expenditure increased from €98 million in 2021 to over €155 million in 2022. This large increase in spend follows the lifting of COVID restrictions placed on construction works, especially in the high-spend area of housing.
- Commercial rates collection has returned to pre-COVID levels increasing to 88% from 83% in 2021. By early 2022, most COVID restrictions were lifted, but a targeted rates waiver scheme remained in place for the first quarter of the year to compensate for certain categories of ratepayers, mainly those in the entertainment and hospitality sectors whose businesses continued to be affected by COVID. These waiver payments amounted to €1.175 million.
- The war in Ukraine broke out in February 2022 and resulted in a number of challenges, including supply chain disruption, and unprecedented inflationary increases, especially in relation to energy prices. In addition, Wicklow County Council implemented a number of measures in response to the arrival to Ireland of Ukrainian families fleeing the war including the provision of emergency hotel accommodation, the Offer a Home programme and the refurbishment and allocation of vacant properties.
- During 2022 a total of €1.4 million was given by the Council on these measures which in turn was reimbursed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The capital debt at the end of 2022 amounted to €62 million, a reduction of €10 million on the 2021 figure due to the redemption of a number of HFA land acquisition loans.
- With a significant amount of expenditure incurred, a lot was achieved in 2022 and some of the key actions and deliverables are outlined on pages 6 and 7 of the financial review.
- In relation to the net expenditure in excess of budget these amounts are: Housing and building, €623,641. Roads, transportation and safety, 459,825. Water services, €144,094. Developed management €381,065. Environmental services €92,341 and recreation and amenity €641,394.
- The total transfers to capital are €8,339,453 and from capital €2,479,292.

It was proposed by Cllr. V. Blake, seconded by Cllr. G. Walsh and agreed by all to approve:

- (i) additional net expenditure in excess of budget in accordance with Section 104(7) of the Local Government Act 2001 and;
- (ii) additional transfers to and from capital in excess of budget.

ITEM NO 7

To consider the Chief Executive's Monthly Management Report, April 2023.

Elected Members were circulated with the Chief Executive Monthly Management Report April 2023.

Elected Members raised questions which were responded to by the Chief Executive and the relevant Director of Services.

ITEM NO. 8

To receive a presentation: Mermaid Arts Centre 21st Birthday

Ms. J. Kelleher, Director, Mermaid Arts Centre gave a presentation outlining the following:

- Based in Bray, celebrating 21 years of bringing arts and culture to Wicklow.
- Since 2002, centre has been a celebratory stage for artists and communities locally.
- Connects artists and communities across County Wicklow in exchanging artistic experiences that spark curiosity, delight and debate while fostering pride, pleasure and wellbeing.
- Empower creativity in Wicklow.
- Present diverse programme of cultural events for the public, including visual arts, music, theatre, dance, opera, cinema and the annual Yarn Storytelling Festival.
- Nurture the development of artistic talent and take a programming approach that gets in at the ground level.
- Mermaid Arts Centre offers commissions, bursaries and residencies.
- Champion artists through unique and nationally influential programmes such as our Transform Programme in which professional artists draw a part-time salary as associate members of the staff.
- Home for local communities to celebrate and spotlight their creativity.
- Provide facilities for professional groups such as Fighting Words Wicklow and local arts groups from the community such as Wicklow School of Dance among many others.
- Curate a creative learning programme that offers workshops to encourage people of all ages and abilities to connect with their own creativity.
- Funding provided through Wicklow County Council and the Arts Council.

There followed a short discussion in which the Elected Members thanked Ms. Kelleher for her presentation and for all the work that the Mermaid Arts Centre are doing. They wished the Centre well in the future.

ITEM NO. 9

To receive a presentation: Personal Safety for Elected Members

Sergeant John Fitzpatrick, Crime Prevention Officer gave a presentation on Personal Safety for Elected Officials outlining the following:

- Survey of Councillors regarding intimidation.
- Bad behaviour.
- Warning signs.
- Home visits.
- In an instance where the previous options are not practical or possible:
- Callers to your own home.
- Home and Office security.
- Security Risk Register.
- Social media.
- Social Media abuse.
- Social Media red flags.

Following the presentation the Elected Members expressed views and raised queries which were responded to by Sergeant Fitzpatrick.

Suspension of Standing Orders

1. Cllr. P. Glennon, seconded by Cllr. E. Timmins requested a suspension of standing orders to discuss the following:

‘That this Council condemns the failure of AIB to reinstate cash handling services at the Blessington Branch of AIB, having reversed their policy in respect of cashless branches (70 branches) throughout Ireland in July 2022. The Blessington Branch went cashless in December 2021 as a pilot of the cashless branch policy then being pursued by AIB and, thankfully now abandoned by senior management. The situation in Blessington is now particularly serious as there is no banking service with cash handling services available since the closure of Ulster Bank on the 21st April 2023. This Council now calls on the Minister for Finance to encourage AIB senior management to restore cash handling services at the Blessington AIB branch as a matter of urgency’.

It was proposed by Cllr. P. Glennon, seconded by Cllr. J. Behan and agreed by all to write the Minister for Finance and to the Board of Management of AIB.

2. Cllr. P. Fitzgerald, seconded by Cllr. P. Kennedy requested a suspension of standing orders to discuss the cancellation of the 133 Bus Service from Arklow to Wicklow. The 133 Bus Service from Wicklow Town to Busárus has been enhanced to 143 departures each way every week.

It was proposed by Cllr. P. Fitzgerald, seconded by Cllr. P. Kennedy and agreed by all to write to Bus Éireann to request that the 133 Bus Service from Arklow to Wicklow be re-instated with immediate effect.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

**CLLR. TOMMY ANNESLEY
CATHAOIRLEACH
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**MS. HELEN PURCELL
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/
MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR**

Confirmed at meeting of Wicklow County Council held on Monday the 12th June 2023