



**Wicklow County Council
Chomhairle Chontae Chill Mhantáin**

ARKLOW MUNICIPAL DISTRICT

**MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON ZOOM PLATFORM ON WEDNESDAY
10TH FEBRUARY 2021**

Present: Cllr. Sylvester Bourke, Cathaoirleach
Cllr. Tommy Annesley
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald
Cllr. Peir Leonard
Cllr. Pat Kennedy
Cllr. Miriam Murphy

Officials Present: Mr. Colm Lavery, District Manager
Ms. Claire Lawless, District Administrator
Ms. Avril Hill, District Engineer
Mr. Rob Mulhall, Executive Engineer
Ms. Christine Flood, SEO, Enterprise and Corporate Services
Ms. Susan Nichols, AO, Enterprise and Corporate Services
Ms. Sinéad Boddy, ASO

Item 1: Votes of Sympathy.

The Members expressed votes of sympathy to all families who have recently lost loved ones, there have been a number of deaths over the last few weeks and a few known to all are - James O'Reilly – JuJu, Mick Cullen, Ann Ferguson, Har Donnelly.

A minutes silence was observed.

Members also expressed thanks to all of those working in Health Services over the last year.

Item 2 : Confirmation of Minutes from Special Meeting held on the 11th November 2020.

The Minutes of the Arklow Municipal District Special Meeting held on the 11th November 2020 were proposed by Cllr Leonard and seconded by Cllr Annesley.

Item 3 : Confirmation of Minutes from Ordinary Meeting held on the 11th November 2020.

The Minutes of the Arklow Municipal District Ordinary Meeting held on the 11th November 2020 were proposed by Cllr Fitzgerald and seconded by Cllr Annesley.

Item 4 : Confirmation of Minutes from Special Meeting held on the 28th January 2021.

The Minutes of the Arklow Municipal District Special Meeting held on the 28th January 2021 were proposed by Cllr. Annesley and seconded by Cllr. Leonard.

Item 5 : Matters Arising.

No matters arising.

Item 6 : To consider report in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 – 2006 (as amended) in respect of the proposed development of a Community & Enterprise Centre at St. Joseph’s, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow, site adjacent to St. Saviour’s Church.

Cllr Bourke invited Cllr Kennedy to brief the members on the proposal.

Cllr Kennedy informed the meeting that this idea started locally in Rathdrum and is years in the making - the final concept will include a community centre with an economic side to it. Currently there is nothing in the town for young people who are not involved in sports and this development will attempt to harmonise that.

The introduction of hot-desking in the centre will bring life back into the town centre which has become stagnated over the last number of years. The centre is an exciting project for the town and will accommodate all age groups and will provide an access point for a range of services.

This project has been realised with input from WCC staff including the Chief Executive, District Manager and staff from the Economic Development Unit – No stone was left unturned and the community expressed heartfelt thanks for that. Also noted were thanks to staff for work on the RRDF funding application which will change the town.

Cllr Kennedy requested the support of the members and formally proposed the Part 8 application.

Cllr Fitzgerald seconded the proposal and re-iterated that the development would be good for Rathdrum. Cllr Annesley acknowledged at the hard work gone into this project and was assured that it was welcomed by the wider community. Cllr Bourke noted that he had been speaking to a local businessman from Rathdrum and he had such praise for the work done to get this project to this stage and stated that we are all on the same team on this.

Cllr Leonard commented that Rathdrum is a beautiful little village and asked if there was a plan drafted for who could use the building and how they would be given access to use the premises.

Cllr Murphy said it was great to see the plan in place and it would be a bonus for young and old alike and would bring the community together and shows commitment to the development of rural towns.

Christine Flood SEO, on behalf of WCC, colleagues and members, commended the team effort in getting this project to this stage. This will be a community and enterprise centre for all and the proposed management of the centre will be in the form of a Board of Management. The centre will house a small enterprise hub, a kitchen for community use, an ice-cream parlour and a multi-purpose space, to name a few potential uses.

Cllr Murphy requested that Changing Places facilities are included in the final plan – Christine Flood replied that this could be considered at the detailed design stage and that space would be available to consider this. Cllr Leonard asked that facilities for artists are also considered with rooms/working spaces made available for artists and a craft area. Christine Flood SEO confirmed that the multi-purpose area could have many uses and that the area on site where the two older buildings are, could be renovated and the courtyard area could possibly be used for crafts purposes. This could be a possibility further down the road.

Cllr Bourke enquired about how the project was to be financed – Christine Flood SEO confirmed that an application for funding had been made under the RRDF funding scheme - 3m – with WCC making provision for the 10% match funding required. Cllr Bourke commented that the project was ‘shovel ready’. Cllr Leonard stressed the need to have a good business plan in place to enable the centre to sustain itself into the future.

The members unanimously approved the Part 8 application -

Name	For/Against
Cllr Bourke	For
Cllr Annesley	For
Cllr Fitzgerald	For
Cllr Kennedy	For
Cllr Leonard	For
Cllr Murphy	For

Item 7 : To consider report in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 – 2006 (as amended) in respect of the proposed development in Redcross Village - Main Street Improvement Works.

Cllr Bourke invited Rob Mulhall to brief the members on this project.

Rob Mulhall EE confirmed that a community group from Redcross were successful in applying for TVR funding and were allocated a grant of €80,000. WCC have since set about putting together a design following a number of meetings with residents – from those meetings it was agreed to engage the services of a conservation engineer with a view to retaining the cobbled drains that run along the Main Street.

The main issues to be addressed are –

- Footpaths
- Definitive roadway with pedestrian safety considerations.
- Traffic through the village – location of restaurant invites spurious parking as there are no road markings – need for defined parking areas.
- Need to close in Main St. width to discourage speeding through the village – 5.5m
- Install a pedestrian crossing – no lights.
- Address a pinch point (wall of residential property on roadway) by installation of a buildout to allow for an uninterrupted footpath.
- Put in place a yield/give way system – flow of traffic is quiet in general and lends itself to this option.
- Prioritise pedestrians.

- Public lighting – ducting and sleeves for future use.
- Measures for visually impaired at crossing

Cllr Bourke said it was an excellent plan – huge effort taken.

Cllr Leonard said it was great to see a plan to preserve the cobbled drains and consideration given to protecting the heritage of the village and requested that the plan would also include the future installation of charging points for electric vehicles. Rob Mulhall confirmed that this would be considered and would not impact on the current Part 8 plan.

Cllr Kennedy asked if contractors would be required for the restoration works on the drains – Rob Mulhall EE confirmed that these would be a feature only and the existing design would be sufficient and they would little or no maintenance.

Cllr Murphy agreed that the plan was a good one and referred to the AMD meeting held in Redcross and the presentation from the community group – great to see it come to reality and a great improvement for the village – thanks to Rob and John Bowes for their input.

Rob Mulhall EE confirmed that tendering process should begin in April – Covid dependant – and the works would take a couple of months to complete.

The Part 8 was proposed by Cllr Bourke and seconded by Cllr Murphy.

The members unanimously approved the Part 8 application -

Name	For/Against
Cllr Bourke	For
Cllr Annesley	For
Cllr Fitzgerald	For
Cllr Kennedy	For
Cllr Leonard	For
Cllr Murphy	For

Item 8 : District Engineers Report.

Avril Hill DE updated the members –

Confirming that the status of the footpath jobs are as follows –

- Avoca - 100% complete
- Aughrim – 100% complete
- Rathdrum – 90% complete

The status of the following projects remains unchanged due to Covid-19 restrictions –

- Local Improvement Scheme – Shroughmore (50% complete)
- Savilles Cross – Pedestrian Crossing (60% complete)

Other essential works such as housing repairs, street sweeping, pothole repairs and drainage works are currently being undertaken.

Cllr Kennedy fully welcomed the installation of the pedestrian crossing at Saville’s Cross and asked when AMD expected to secure funding for the next set. The footpaths from Avoca to

Rathdrum have been a huge benefit to locals. He asked the DE if there was emergency funding available for roads – after recent weather events the rural roads are in a dreadful state and need repairs. Avril Hill DE replied that AMD were conscious of this as the flooding caused additional wear and the roads programme would be prioritised. Rob Mulhall EE suggested that further funding for crossings would be sought under next NTA package. Colm Lavery DM confirmed that an application has been made by WCC and allocations have not yet been announced. WCC will continue to apply for funding. Cllr Murphy suggested that the members need to push this with TD's as it is not just damage caused over the last few weeks – needs to be pushed nationally. Cllr Bourke confirmed that this could be considered once the announcement from the NTA was received.

Cllr Bourke asked for an update on other IPB works in Rathdrum and Rob Mulhall EE confirmed that the contractor was on site and carrying out repairs at the moment and the challenge there was getting everything completed.

Cllr Leonard asked if the EE and DE could put together an audit/list of outstanding works versus the deficit in district funds. Both agreed that this could be done. Cllr Fitzgerald asked that the rural roads on the outskirts of Arklow town are included in this report also.

Rob Mulhall EE confirmed that there was no denying that the quantity of rural roads in need of repair will work against AMD getting all on the priority list – availability of funding streams also pushes some down the pecking order. Cllr Murphy said that people are paying taxes and that we should be pushing for these repairs and shout for those who have been forgotten – areas with schools and villages are heavily trafficked and need to be looked after.

Cllr Bourke asked that the members are kept informed early of the areas that will not be reached this year.

Item 9 : To discuss Estates Development Grants for 2021.

Claire Lawless DA informed the members that this year's estate funding scheme is open for applications and the closing date for receipt of applications is the 5th March 2021. The forms will be emailed to all members.

Cllr Fitzgerald asked if estates with RAS properties fit the criteria – Colm Lavery DM clarified that these were still landlord/tenant properties and are deemed private. Cllr Annesley asked if there needed to be a required number of social houses on an estate for qualification for the grant. Claire Lawless DA will clarify this and let the members know and stated that the estates needed to have a residents association in operation to qualify.

Cllr Bourke confirmed that it is up to AMD to confirm if an estate is eligible.

Item 10 : To discuss Festival Funding Scheme for 2021

Claire Lawless DA asked the members to consider the amount to be awarded to local groups this year - €5000 was suggested. Cllr Bourke suggested that members could look at virtual events this year. Cllr Murphy agreed and stated that AMD should support those who are trying to hold events. Cllr Leonard said that we need to think outside the box on this and ensure that the established events continue into the future.

Cllr Kennedy advised holding off on advertising the scheme until March or April when we will have a clearer idea of what future lockdown restrictions will be in place.

Item 11: To receive an update on Arklow Municipal Districts response to recent Flooding

Cllr Bourke said that recent water levels were unprecedented. Cllr Annesley commended the Local Authority for its response – different to river flooding with the volume of rain that fell. Webb's river burst its banks and the flooding on Sea Rd was unbelievable and thanks to Rob and the outdoor staff for their efforts to keep damage to a minimum. Funding will need to be made available for these events – the construction of Bridgewater has mitigated some of the risk but further along needs to be protected.

Cllr Fitzgerald said that South Green escaped flooding because works there have made a difference. The Sea Rd area, Webb's river and the caravan park, were not so fortunate and were in a desperate state. It is hard to source funding at the moment but something needs to be done, if the rain had not stopped....the damage would have been unmentionable.

Cllr Leonard asked if an analysis of the drainage network has been carried out – Can the FRS accommodate some of the infrastructure required – Tree planting is also a key element of flood defence and needs to be looked at. Is there a drainage maintenance plan in place or are works/repairs reactionary?

Rob Mulhall EE confirmed that the drainage network is actively managed and maintained when required – any recent issues were related to the sheer volume of water and not a localised issue. Cllr Leonard acknowledged the experience of current staff and urged that consideration be given for when staff retire to have that knowledge passed on. Cllr Fitzgerald also confirmed that currently they are well on top of the situation and not much more could have been done and noted the works carried out on a 10km stretch in the recent months helped tremendously.

Colm Lavery DM confirmed that the Major Emergency Management team were monitoring the weather situation with Met Eireann and recent weather was considered a freak event and past what was predicted no system could take that level of rainfall without issues – water was free-flowing where possible, locations with combined wastewater systems were problematic and IW are aware of this. All systems are mapped to ensure that we can deal with any issues.

Item 12 : To receive an update on the LA Housing Energy Fabric Upgrade Programme of Works and what is planned for 2021.

Cllr Bourke stated that he had received complaints from tenants that they had been left out of fabric upgrade schemes while other tenants on the estate had the upgrade works done – Cllr Fitzgerald commented that currently redbrick houses cannot be included for the insulation upgrade works and reiterated that the older housing stock in the district need to be assessed and works carried out where necessary – focus initially should be on the age of the estate.

Cllr Kennedy thanked the staff in the MD for works carried out in the district and stressed that more properties require fabric upgrades – stitch in time saves nine. The report received is not good enough and the members need to see a comparative report covering the last few years. AMD needs to request a more in depth report.

Cllr Murphy agreed – tenants are paying high rents for inadequate houses and they should expect a high standard.

Cllr Annesley said he has been very vocal on the SPC and it is not acceptable that the information is not forthcoming – funding needs to be put in place. This comment is made not to criticise staff but to request better communication.

Colm Lavery DM confirmed that the members agree on an amount for fabric upgrades as part of the budgetary process. It would be appropriate for a representative from the Housing Management to be invited to attend an AMD meeting. Cllr Bourke agreed and asked Claire Lawless DA to invite a representative to the next meeting.

Item 13 : To discuss future housing needs in Arklow MD.

The members discussed possible options for building in Arklow Municipal District – one suggestion was to consider de-zoning lands around towns and another to build inwards – one 8 acre site in Arklow town could be considered for purchase.

Further discussion continued on potential sites in the town and what needs could be met by looking at sites within the town boundaries. This is to be discussed with the CE to put forward all options if both, extending the town boundaries or building inwards were to be considered. A partnership development approach could also be considered.

Colm Lavery DM agreed to broach this with the CE and explore all options.

Item 14 : To receive an update on the Harbour Charges for Arklow and Wicklow.

The draft schedule of charges is to be circulated to the members for their comments.

Cllr Leonard said it is so important for all stakeholders to have an input here as any plan would have implications for vessels docking in Arklow.

Cllr Fitzgerald agreed and said the fishermen need to be on board with any plans.

Cllr Bourke asked if there was time available to tease this out and Claire Lawless DA stated that the schedule was for information purposes for the moment and would clarify the process and advise the members further.

Item 15 : To receive an update on the Kilbride Graveyard.

The first step for the future of the graveyard is to put together a conservation plan – this can then be used going forward when applying for future funding.

Cllr Bourke asked if it would be possible for the TUS group to continue their work in the graveyard and clarification is needed on this – would they be insured to continue.

Cllr Murphy said that the Heritage Officer works closely with the group leader and Philip Geoghegan the conservationist. Cllr Murphy also expressed concern about the group working there when the graveyard was now under new ownership. Cllr Murphy suggested that the District Administrator meet with Deirdre, Jennifer and Philip on zoom to clarify things.

Cllr Kennedy expressed huge thanks to Jennifer and for her dedication to keeping the site in order and giving it a future. Cllr Leonard stated that it would attract tourists and would

connect tourist points in the town and would look really well if the pyramid could be lit up and visible from the N11.

Item 16 : Correspondence

No correspondence received.

Item 17: A.O.B

Cllr Kennedy thanked the Cathaoirleach, District Manager and Chief Executive for meeting to discuss the future of St Gabriel's Graveyard – The update clarified that there are 150 spaces left and on current usage that gives another 4 years – if the trees were removed this would give an extra 20 spaces – with an extension by pushing back a wall another 100 spaces could be made giving an extra 3 years – Up to 7 years with remedial works. The CE is to liaise with the district engineers to progress future plans. Cllr Kennedy confirmed that something has been achieved and the members will push this forward. Cllr Kennedy asked the members to come forward with any suggestions. Cllr Fitzgerald said he was relieved to hear that there was a potential 7 years – this gives WCC time to make plans for the future.

Cllr Leonard stated that the removal of trees would not be the preferred option and she would not agree to this – it brings solace to many knowing their loved ones are near nature – Arklow needs another graveyard, some of the land at Churchview could be considered for planting more trees and this would also improve the drainage. Cllr Fitzgerald confirmed he would also prefer a new site but has no issue with trees being cut back in St. Gabriel's.

Cllr Bourke said he was encouraged that the CE requested reports on this. Cllr Kennedy asked all to come back to him with proposals and to work on this together to get a new graveyard for the town – it will not happen overnight. Cllr Leonard asked that the members are kept informed as things proceed.

Colm Lavery DM stated that the upcoming meeting was the initial step to identify issues and whatever plans are drawn up will come back to the members for their input. Remedial works will give AMD time until a new graveyard is established.

Cllr Annesley has received several complaints about dog fouling – one in particular from a young girl in Avoca highlighting the lack of signage and bins, she has also written to the Seanad about this. More bins are needed on public walkways.

The members discussed the delays in getting public lighting repairs done – most probable cause is the plan to replace infrastructure. Colm Lavery DM confirmed that a meeting is to take place with ESB Networks and AMD will have an update then.

There is an issue with older poles that needs to be addressed quickly – national issue – The long term plan is to retrofit with LED. Declan O'Brien and his team have put a huge amount of work in over recent months – 180 off the list.

Cllr Leonard asked for confirmation of the public information date for the Flood Relief Scheme – it needs to be as soon as possible. Arklow could lose business if the issue of dredging is not resolved. The port depth is a crucial part of the plan for the windfarm company.

Cllr Bourke asked the DE to replace a yield sign at Kingston’s Junction Ballyrogan.

Minutes confirmed at the Arklow Municipal District Council Meeting held on Wednesday the 10th March 2021.

Signed: _____

Cathaoirleach of Arklow Municipal District.

Signed: _____

Ms. Claire Lawless, District Administrator, Arklow Municipal District