

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in Blessington Civic Offices on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 at 10.30am**

**Present:** Cathaoirleach Edward Timmins  
Councillor Vincent Blake  
Councillor Avril Cronin  
Councillor Gerry O’Neill  
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. Aideen Russell, Assistant Staff Officer

**Apologies:** Councillor John Mullen

Cathaoirleach Edward Timmins opened the January meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District and welcomed all present.

**Votes of Sympathy**

Cllr. Blake expressed a vote of sympathy to Cllr. Mullen on the passing of his Father-in-law, Mr John Feerick.

And to the family of Tony Duffy of Deerpark, Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow who sadly passed in Los Angeles on December 26th, 2023.

Mr. Byrne expressed a vote of sympathy to our colleague and friend Con Cashen on the passing of his Mother, Annette Cashen (née O’Toole), Ballaghaclay, Clonmore, Hacketstown, Co. Carlow and late of Rathdangan, Co. Wicklow.

All present asked to be associated with the above and a minutes silence was observed.

**1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

It was proposed by Cllr. Blake, seconded by Cllr. Cronin and unanimously agreed to confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

## **2. Matters Arising – None.**

## **3. Update on Baltinglass RRDF**

### **Town Centre**

Mr. Byrne informed The Members that works are due to start on or before the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024. An RRDF application for extra funding for Baltinglass Public Realm Project will be submitted to the department in the coming days, this application will not delay current works.

### **Courthouse**

It has been decided works on the Courthouse will be carried out on a phased basis. Phase one will include remedial works to the exterior.

### **Park**

Mr. Graham informed The Members that works had ceased on the park due to bad weather but that works will recommence over the next few weeks. Mr. Graham gave a commitment that he will prioritise the tendering of works for the park.

### **Members Comments and Observations (Baltinglass RRDF)**

- Cllr. Blake stated that in 2020 a costing of 1.5 million euro was given for the bridge in Baltinglass, he expressed his frustration that it is still going through the design process.
- Cllr. Glennon said that ideally the footpaths on both the northern and southern end of Baltinglass should be completed but understood that the northern side would be completed first, he said that he knows the engineers will complete what they can. He asked that all Members push central government to secure finance for this project.
- Cllr. O'Neill said that he felt that rather than carrying out works on the existing bridge, it should be replaced with a new structure to allow for safe crossing for both pedestrians and motorists. Cllr. O'Neill stated that the lack of progress on this project is due to the fact that it is based in West Wicklow. And that priority is not given to projects in West Wicklow.
- Cllr. Timmins advised that he raised the issues regarding works on the Baltinglass Courthouse at a recent full council meeting, Mr. Nicholson confirmed repairs to the façade of the Court House are imminent.

Cllr. Timmins asked Mr. Graham for the Park works to be subcontracted in order to expedite the project.

- Mr. Cullen stated that he has received correspondence from Baltinglass community groups requesting for the Court House works to be carried out ASAP.

#### **4. Update on Active Travel Projects**

The District Engineers updated the members on the Active Travel / Rural Fund and Specific Improvement Progress Report – January 2024, which was circulated to the members prior to the meeting.

Mr. Byrne wanted to put on record that he would like to thank the land owner, Mr. Tyrell for providing part of his front garden to allow works on the R756 Hollywood Footpath progress.

#### **Members Comments and Observations (Active Travel / Rural Fund)**

- Cllr. Blake enquired if the footpath works in each area would be done simultaneously.
  - Mr. Graham confirmed that they would work hand in hand, that the only service they couldn't confirm to be done simultaneously was ESB connections.

Cllr. Blake asked if there was scope for road widening at the road down past the school in Coolafancy.

- Mr. Graham said that there was no scope for road widening in the area and that the road will narrow.

Cllr. Blake requested that Mr. Graham speak with the landowners at Duffy's Corner.

Cllr. Blake also enquired about 3 public lights at Ballard Upper which are not working.

- Mr. Graham agreed to confirm whether or not Ballard Upper is taken in charge and Ms. Kilkenny stated that if we had taken this area in charge that we would deal with it ASAP.
- Cllr. O'Neill enquired as to why there was a delay in getting public lighting and pedestrian crossings switched back on after being turned off for the carrying out of surveys.
  - Mr. Byrne informed Cllr. O'Neill that all lights have been turned back on bar one crossing and that he has been in touch with the company involved regarding the problems incurred.

- Cllr. Glennon acknowledged the work carried out to date on the Hollywood footpath and asked to be associated with Mr. Byrne's expression of thanks to Mr. Tyrell.

Cllr. Glennon said that he is anxious to get road safety upgrade works at Main Street, Kiltegan.

- Cllr. Timmins commended Mr. Byrne on the great work carried out on the Grangecon Village Footpath.

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

The District Engineers updated the members on the Baltinglass MD national and non-national roads reports, both of which were circulated to the members prior to the meeting.

### **Members Comments and Observations (national roads)**

- Cllr. Cronin expressed her concerns regarding white lines on the N81 north of Blessington. The lines were not visible when Cllr. Cronin travelled the N81 recently and which, coupled with bad driving conditions made the journey very dangerous.
  - Mr. Byrne advised Cllr. Cronin that the surface on this stretch of road is in good condition and a build-up of dirt was causing the problem. Road cleaning has been arranged for that area similar to the road cleaning carried out prior to Christmas. He reiterated the limited funding available for cleaning.

Cllr. Cronin asked if the crossing at the Dutchman's was a TII or local issue.

- Mr. Byrne explained that a pelican crossing without flashing beacons would not be allowed. He informed The Members that there is currently a pilot scheme being carried out in three locations and if approved that it may be an option. He advised that a four way traffic lights system may be an option. However this may cause a backlog of traffic.
- Cllr. O'Neill expressed his disappointment that nothing has been done regarding improvements needed on the N81. Especially now that huge development is happening from Blessington to Tallaght. He asked could TII be requested to come and meet with The Members.
  - Cllr. Blake commented that eight years ago a meeting was held with TDs, TII and officials and they were adamant at that time that funding would not be made available for construction of a new carriageway to replace the N81.
  - Cllr. Glennon agreed that for Blessington to progress the essential infrastructure, a new carriageway, needed to be in place.
  - Ms. Kilkenny, said that progress was being made on the relief road, which, once completed, will divert traffic off Blessington Main Street. And that she had spoken to the DOS of Roads, Ms. Earls and asked her for an update of same for The Members.
  - Cllr. O'Neill also asked Ms. Kilkenny to enquire about the water and sewage mains for the southern end of the N81.
  - Ms. Kilkenny agreed to check this with Ms. Earls.
  - Mr. Byrne advised that these works would be carried out by Uisce Éireann which may cause funding to be problematic.

- Cllr. Cronin asked for an update on Colbinstown Bridge as it is restricting movement of heavy vehicles.
- Cllr. Cronin also enquired about road improvements outside the crèche in Donard.
  - Mr. Byrne said that he is awaiting advice from Planners, and said that ramps and line markings may be a solution to slow traffic.
- Cllr. Blake enquired about the name signs for bridges in the district.
  - Mr. Graham advised Cllr. Blake that he will have the signs erected over the coming weeks.
- Cllr. Blake also enquired about Kennystown Road and asked if a discussion could be held regarding progressing the repairs.
  - Mr. Graham said he will revisit this project and see what can be done to progress repairs.

A discussion was held regarding the three year roads programme and The Members were informed by Mr. Byrne and Mr. Graham that they are awaiting their allocation of funds which should be received in September. The Members were informed that each road is rated and categorised, with category 1-2 receiving priority. The Members were also asked to be aware of the following with regards to their road repair wish lists, tender price, inflation and that funding is not guaranteed.

- Cllr. Blake enquired about the governing of periodic speed limits, particularly in the area of schools and was informed that By-Laws are in place for same.
- Cllr. Timmins raised the poor condition of the Ballymore to Dunlavin Road and was informed by Mr. Byrne that this will be looked at under the new roads programme. Cllr. Timmins also asked Mr. Graham to prioritise white line marking in Kiltegan.

## **6. Correspondence**

- The Members were informed that Further Information requested by An Bord Pleanála would be submitted this week and a copy of same would be available on An Bord Pleanála's website as it is a public document.
- Mr. Cullen proposed two dates for the Baltinglass policing committee meeting to be held and it was agreed by all and scheduled to take place at 10.30am on Friday 2nd February 2024 in the Blessington Office.
- Cllr. Timmins asked that a decision be made on the invitation to attend the seminar in Castle Maggiore in April 2024 as he would like to formally respond.
  - Cllr. Blake enquired as to what happens at such events and what has been accomplished from attending.
  - Cllr. Timmins said that substantial connections were made and ideas shared.

- Mr. Cullen informed Cllr. Blake that since meeting up with the Castle Maggiore group contacts have been made between local groups from each area. Scout, Historical, Librarian and Marginalised groups to name a few.
- Cllr. Glennon stated that the trips were highly informative.
- Cllr. Blake stated that the Wurzburg – German twinning has developed hugely and has proved to be beneficial for Wicklow Municipal District.
- Cllr. O’Neill brought up the subject of the O’Neill City in Nebraska USA twinning with Blessington and asked Mr. Cullen what monies have been spent on twinning with Castle Maggiore to date. Mr. Cullen said that he would get the figures for the next meeting.
- Cllr. Timmins stated that public spending is taken very seriously and is 100% transparent.
- Cllr. Glennon stated that the current Baltinglass Municipal District members have been supportive of all twinning projects brought before them. Highlighting that the O’Neill City in Nebraska USA twinning with Blessington was completed during their term in office.
- Cllr Glennon formally proposed that one official and two Councillors from Baltinglass MD accept the invitation to attend the seminar in Castle Maggiore in April 2024. This proposal was seconded by Cllr. Blake and unanimously agreed by all.
- Mr. Cullen informed The Members that correspondence had been received from the Coollattin Canadian Connection group requesting support from Baltinglass Municipal District for upcoming events in 2024. Mr. Cullen stated that this group have proved to be very beneficial to our community.
  - Cllr. Blake asked Mr. Cullen to enquire about the recently announced tourism initiative regarding the four provinces of Ireland.

## **8. Any other business**

- A discussion was held regarding the core strategies and population growth of the district. Concerns were voiced regarding reaching housing limits. And a request was made for an update report on the number of people living in the towns and villages, including refugees.
  - Ms. Kilkenny is organising for Ms. Walsh and her team from Forward Planning to meet with The Members in Blessington to discuss further.
  - Cllr. Timmins stated that the fundamental problem is that we are working off figures from the old plan and the 2016 census.

- Ms. Kilkenny also agreed to request an update on the Part 8 - Burgage Manor from DOS of Housing, Mr. Lane.
- Cllr. O'Neill expressed his disgust at members of the public being excluded from attending a Blessington Forum meeting and threats of being reported to the Gardaí if they did not leave. Cllr. O'Neill said that Baltinglass Municipal District Members and Officials should be cautious when engaging with public groups.
- Cllr. Cronin asked that the following three items be discussed later with Mr. Byrne and Mr. Cullen; (1) On-going problems with public lighting, (2) Funding for the Dunlavin Hall & (3) A request from the Kayaking Club for an onsite storage facility for their equipment.

### **9. Date of next meeting**

The next Baltinglass Municipal District meeting will be held on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

**There being no other business, Cllr. Timmins, concluded the meeting.**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated: 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024