

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER MONTHLY MEETING OF GREYSTONES MUNICIPAL DISTRICT HELD IN THE CIVIC OFFICES, MILL ROAD, GREYSTONES, CO. WICKLOW ON TUESDAY 26TH NOVEMBER 2024 AT 7.30 P.M.

Present: Councillor T. Fortune, Cathaoirleach
Councillors M. Barry, O. Finn, L. Fenelon-Gaskin, L. Scott & S. Stokes

Also Present: Mr. M. Devereux, Greystones Municipal District Manager
Mr. R. O'Hanlon, Greystones Municipal District Engineer
Dr. Hannah O'Kelly, WCC Biodiversity Officer
Ms. Sarah Rubalcava, WCC Environment Awareness Officer
Ms. T. Kearns, Greystones Municipal District Administrator
Ms. K. Coughlan, Greystones Municipal District

1. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Councillor L. Scott requested that the sentence 'Members expressed concerns that charging for the Park and Ride would discourage its use' be inserted at the end of paragraph three, item four, of the draft minutes of the October meeting and this was agreed.

It was then proposed by Councillor O. Finn, seconded by Councillor L. Fenelon Gaskin and agreed that the amended minutes of the monthly meeting held on 29th October, 2024, as circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

2. DATE FOR DECEMBER MEETING

Following discussion, it was agreed to hold the December monthly meeting at 7 p.m. on Tuesday 10th December 2024.

3. REPORT FROM GREYSTONES MUNICIPAL DISTRICT ENGINEER

A report from the District Engineer had been circulated to the members in advance of the meeting. In response to queries from the members the District Engineer stated that contractors were now doing ironworks on the Crowe Abbey road following its resurfacing and that they would clear the gully at the bottom of the road too. He pointed out that it was best practice to resurface roads and raise the manholes, etc. afterwards as it gave a better road surface finish. He stated that the issue with the public light at 9, Grattan Park had been referred to the Council's Public Lighting section but that there was a delay in finalising a new contractor following the tender process. He pointed out that fencing had been left up around the new boules facility in Burnaby Park to allow the grass to grow and that the fencing would remain until the grass had been cut a few times.

The District Engineer informed the members that the Active Travel Team was organising public consultation on the Safe Route to School scheme on Blacklion Manor Road and that work in relation to the Killincarrig Village renewal scheme, such as the undergrounding of ESB cables, was progressing behind the scenes. In relation to the Delgany Accessibility Scheme he stated that consultants were working on the detail design and preparation of contract documents for the Church Road part and that options for a Part 8 process were being considered for the Convent Road. He agreed to look at improving the path from St. Crispins to the railway though he pointed out that access was tricky here and he stated that while a pedestrian crossing on the Mill Road near the junction with Mill Road would require a controlled signal or flashing lights, there was no space to provide either at present. He stated that options for this area were being looked at as part of the Pathfinder scheme.

The District Engineer stated that the new technician, who took up duty in the Municipal District this week, would be trained up on speed surveys and would then assess alleged speeding issues on Bellevue Hill. He pointed out that this road had been made much safer with the recent provision of a new footpath. He informed the members that new repeater speed limit signs would be erected to advise the public of the new rural speed limits that were reducing from 80kph to 60kph. In relation to funding for Department of Transport Climate Action measures he pointed out that the Municipal District applied to the Roads Section each year for funding for projects, e.g. for drainage works to make roads more climate friendly, and that the Roads

Section then submitted an application to the Department for funding. He stated that the Department decided on which projects to fund.

In relation to past flooding at Kenmare Heights, the District Engineer informed the members that the issue had been identified and that the Council was looking at options to manage it in order to apply for funding. He stated that discussions would first have to take place with some residents there. He informed the members that the barriers removed from in front of St. Patrick's School would not be replaced as such barriers were now considered to be a hazard to cyclists and pedestrians and prevented vehicles from moving off the road in the event of a breakdown. In relation to the new public lighting at the Pigs Hollow he stated that he has been pushing this with the ESB and he informed the members that improvement works to the junction of Woodlands Avenue and Mill Road were being considered as part of the Pathfinder project. He pointed out that no funding had yet been granted for a study at Dr. Ryan Park and he suggested that it might be practical to group Dr. Ryan Park with the Sandpit at Killincarrig and Mill Lane to get all three areas assessed together.

The District Engineer stated that a new three year roads programme had now been prepared and that he would circulate a copy to the members and he pointed out that all road works were linked with other works in the district. He stated that the Kilcoole Main Street was included in the new roads programme and he pointed out that some footpath improvement works were included in a recent project in Newcastle and that he would check if further works were required from the public house to the cottages there. He pointed out that the footpath on the eastern side of the R761 north of Kilcoole would be completed as soon as the current works were completed on a property there.

Members thanked the District Engineer for his concise report and for works carried out in the district.

4. UPDATE ON CLIFF WALK

The Cathaoirleach referred to an email received from the Save the Cliff Walk group and he requested that the District Manager reply to the issues outlined in that email in due course. He stated that every effort should be made to have the Cliff Walk re-opened as soon as possible.

The District Manager informed the members that Council officials had met last week with representatives from Irish Rail who were happy to share information they had on all the issues identified and he stated that Irish Rail wished to engage, consult and be involved in all the discussions, which would be very beneficial to the Council. He stated that a brief was being drafted to hire consultants to look at all the issues and to come up with short term and long term solutions. He stated that this work would require serious funding and that the Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council was seeking funding from the Minister for same. He pointed out that it was not possible to open the Cliff Walk in the coming weeks but that it would be opened when and if the consultants identified a short term solution to enable that to happen.

Members requested that Wicklow County Council issue a public statement that clearly outlined the issues in relation to the Cliff Walk, and proposals for getting it re-opened, as many people were not aware of the dangers of using the walk or the reasons why it was closed. The District Manager agreed to organise for a press release to be issued in this regard.

In relation to meetings of the Cliff Walk Management Committee members suggested that all six district councillors should be circulated with the minutes of their meetings. The District Manager stated that normal practice was to adopt minutes at the following meeting and he suggested that the Greystones Municipal District members on the Committee could keep their fellow Councillors updated. He pointed out that the minutes could not be made public as many sensitive issues were discussed.

In response to a suggestion that all six district councillors be included on the committee, the District Administrator informed the members that the Cliff Walk Management Committee was a Wicklow County Council sub-committee and therefore any changes to the membership of the committee would have to be agreed at County Council level.

She pointed out that the committee membership, with two representatives from Greystones Municipal District, , was agreed by the members at the GMD annual meeting earlier this year.

Following further discussion the members thanked the District Manager for the update and looked forward to getting a progress report again at the January meeting.

5. HOUSING UPDATE REPORT (TO INCLUDE FARRANKELLY CLOSE)

As the Wicklow County Council Biodiversity Officer, Dr. Hannah O'Kelly, and Ms. Sarah Rubalcava, Wicklow County Council Environment Awareness Officer had arrived at the meeting, it was agreed to defer this item and to consider item 6 at this stage.

6. NOTICES OF MOTION

(a) Motion in the name of Councillor S. Stokes:

"Greystones Municipal District shall maintain verges so that they are neat and tidy all year round. If Wicklow County Council wishes to plant flowers, shrubs, trees etc. to enhance biodiversity, these should also be kept neat and tidy."

Councillor S. Stokes proposed this notice of motion and stated that there was a high level of discontent by locals online at the unkempt state of verges in the district. He suggested that the situation was untenable and needed to be re-visited and he referred to a site that was cleared by Wicklow County Council recently while verges were left in an unsightly manner. He stated that while he understood the need for biodiversity measures, there needed to be a balance that was acceptable to all and that included regular grass cutting.

Dr. H. O'Kelly reminded the members that Ireland was in the middle of a biodiversity crisis with one-third of pollinators, which were essential for human food production, in serious trouble. She stated that it was important to maintain essential plant life that supported biodiversity and she pointed out that many plants that had almost disappeared were now beginning to take hold again.

The District Engineer stated that the land cleared by the Council recently was for housing so it had to be cleared eventually. He pointed out that ongoing maintenance was carried out to verges year round although it was not very noticeable and that verges were cut twice yearly. He reminded the members that there was only fourteen outdoor staff in the Municipal District with a huge workload and that grass cutting works were not considered a priority.

The District Manager stated that Wicklow County Council was the first local authority to adopt a Climate Action strategy and that this motion went against that. He pointed out that national Tidy Towns judges considered bio-diversity supporting projects as an important issue for point scoring.

Following further discussion members suggested that Wicklow County Council should arrange more public information campaigns on the benefits of not cutting verges and the long term objectives to allay frustration. They pointed out that invasive species were a huge issue and they suggested that renewed efforts should be made to have the outdoor staff numbers in the Greystones municipal district increased.

Councillor S. Stokes agreed to withdraw his notice of motion as some members said they could not support this motion as presented. Councillor Stokes said he was happy to review and to re-submit an amended motion for a future meeting.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Biodiversity Officer and the Environmental Awareness Officer for attending the meeting.

HOUSING UPDATE REPORT (TO INCLUDE FARRANKELLY CLOSE)

An update on housing matters including Housing Capital Schemes, Part V Deliveries, issues in Farrankelly Close, Re-lets and the Retrofit Programme in the district had been circulated to the members prior to the meeting.

The District Administrator informed the members that any reports of issues in Farrankelly Close were collated and a funding stream was being sought by the Housing Team in order to carry out further works on properties. She stated that after technical assessment, any resources available were used as best as possible.

The District Engineer stated that substantial progress had been made with roofing issues in Farrankelly Close. He stated that similar issues with doors and windows existed in Farrankelly Close and Killadreenan Close in Newtown and that Greystones Municipal District will continue to work through the most urgent issues, when resources permitted.

Members welcomed the report and stated that it was important to keep everyone informed.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items of correspondence.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Councillor O. Finn informed the members that following her representations to the ESB, the Chief Executive Officer of the ESB had agreed to consider providing dedicated contact details for public representatives and Council officials to get information on various issues.

Members and officials welcomed this news and stated that this would be transformative.

2. Councillor S. Stokes proposed that a thank you letter be sent to the delegation from Holyhead that took part in the recent Christmas Lights event in Greystones and this was agreed.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

SIGNED: _____ CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED: _____ DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

DATED THIS: _____ DAY OF _____ 2024