

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in Blessington Civic Offices on 21st October 2024 at 10.30am

Present: Cathaoirleach Patsy Glennon
Councillor Edward Timmins
Councillor Avril Cronin
Councillor Gerry O'Neill
Councillor Peter Stapleton
Councillor Jason Mulhall

In Attendance: Ms. Theresa O' Brien, District Manager
Mr. Pat Byrne, Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. Dermot Graham, Executive Engineer
Mr. Liam Cullen, District Administrator
Ms. Christina Brophy, Clerical Officer
Ms. Lisa Mc Dermott, Assistant Staff Officer
Ms. Ann Marie Butler, Clerical Officer via Zoom
Ms Catherine Byrne, Assistant Staff Officer via Zoom
Mr Pat Burke, Clerical Officer via Zoom
Ms. Margaret Doyle, Clerical Officer via Zoom
Mr. Brian Gleeson, Head of Finance via Zoom

Cathaoirleach Patsy Glennon opened the meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District and welcomed all present.

1. To confirm and sign minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 21st October 2024.

It was proposed by Cllr. Mulhall, seconded by Cllr. Cronin and unanimously agreed to confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal District of Baltinglass dated 21st October 2024.

2. Matters Arising

No matters arising.

3. Update on Baltinglass RRDF

Mr. Byrne advised the members that discussions are ongoing regarding outstanding matters relating to the public realm design. Mr Byrne also advised that Wicklow County Council Direct Labour crew have carried out work on the site earlier in the year but works have now ceased due to the fact that the crew encountered specialised deep trench work which is required to be carried out before they can go back on site, it appears now that this particular work will have to be tendered out. He advised he has a meeting this coming Thursday to discuss how best to proceed with the project.

Members Comments and Observations

Cllr. Timmins asked if the drainage works needs to be completed before the Wicklow County Council direct labour crew can go back on site, he also enquired as to what works the the crew have already done on site. Mr. Byrne responded that the direct labour crew have mainly done the preparation works.

Cllr. O' Neill asked Mr. Byrne to explain what exactly the issues are in Baltinglass. Mr. Byrne replied the project was firstly delayed due to a lack of design information and then when Wicklow County Council staff went on site they encountered complex construction issues .

Cllr. Glennon queried is it necessary for the new piping to go three metres deep for drainage, Mr. Byrne said this is necessary to avoid sewers etc.

Town Park

Mr. Graham stated that a lot of work has taken place in the park in the past few months, he advised that the security fencing has been erected, footpaths & kerbing installed and a playground is to be installed in the coming weeks

4. To Consider Roads Reports (National and Non-National Roads)

National Roads Report

Mr Byrne presented the National Roads report to the Members.

Cllr. Glennon enquired about the roadworks taking place on the N81 adjacent to Russbourough. Mr. Byrne said these are minor works and will be completed in the coming days.

National Roads Report

Mr Graham updated members in relation to the delivery of projects on the Non-National Roads across the district.

District Engineer Mr. Byrne informed the members that speed limits on local roads are dropping to 60kmh and that signage is currently being replaced by Wicklow county Council crews. Regarding the erection of new speed limit signage, Cllr. O' Neill asked why new poles have to be erected when the poles are already there. Mr. Graham explained that in some

locations there was never signage before so new ones are needed. Mr. Byrne added to this by saying that this was procured centrally.

Cllr Cronin highlighted the ongoing issue with public lighting not working throughout the District. Lights not working are constantly being reported by the public, elected members and council officials but nothing is being done to rectify the outages. She expressed her frustration and annoyance with the situation. All members present expressed their frustration also with public lighting issues in the District,

Cllr Glennon highlighted a public lighting issue in Kiltegan that he was notified about and asked if that could be dealt with as priority. Mr Graham said he was aware of the problem will deal with as soon as possible

Cllr. O' Neill stated that there has been funding allocated for repainting yellow lines/boxes and enquired when these works will take place. Mr. Byrne said this would commence in the coming weeks. Cllr. Stapleton queried where the funding came from for the line marking Mr. Byrne said this funding was from a National scheme in conjunction with TII.

5. To consider the draft budgetary plan for the Municipal District of Baltinglass for the financial year ending 31st December 2025.

Mr. Brian Gleeson gave a presentation on the draft budgetary plan. He advised the members that they can adopt the draft plan with or without amendment, he recommended that they approve it pointing out that they can decide at a later stage to move funding if required.

Cllr. Stapleton queried what exactly the members were approving and asked could he have a breakdown funding allocation for each district. Mr. Gleeson said last year's budgetary book will give a good indication of the breakdown as it will be very similar this year's allocation.

Cllr. O' Neill queried if there is a breakdown of the distribution for example housing maintenance. Mr. Gleeson said this will be based on the amount of local authority houses in the district, this will determine the budget pointing out that there won't be a huge variation to previous years.

Cllr. O' Neill also asked how much the discretionary fund will be allocated per councillor in Baltinglass Municipal District. Mr. Gleeson said he is not in favour of dividing the fund per Councillor stating the fund is €235,650 per district.

Cllr. Mulhall asked if he could have a breakdown of cost codes and how are they spent. He feels like Tidy Towns groups are underappreciated and under resourced. Mr. Gleeson said the Economic Development fund can go towards Tidy Towns allocations. Mr. Cullen responded that our district has previously given to tidy towns in the District.

Cllr. Glennon expressed his gratitude to Mr Gleeson for allocating funding to Baltinglass Municipal District while he was Acting CE, he pointed out that this funding was used for much needed footpath repairs in the district. He asked for similar funding to be allocated to

the district in 2025. Mr. Gleeson said this funding became available through a Rural Active Travel Scheme pointing out it was a one off scheme however he will discuss this request with the CE and will consider it if appropriate funding becomes available

Cllr. Cronin stated that basic funding for footpaths and lighting is required in Baltinglass Municipal District however when members raise this they are told there is no extra funding available. She pointed out that funds are provided for leisure centres and arts projects in other parts of the county but in West Wicklow there are no such facilities so the least that should be allocated is funding for basic services. Mr. Gleeson responded that there is significant funding for direct works in all districts.

Cllr. Glennon formally requested that extra technical staff be allocated to Baltinglass Municipal District he pointed out that the district has over 40% of the roads in Wicklow, saying our Engineers are under a lot of pressure to carry out basic duties , saying we need more technical support for our engineers in order to meet the workloads. This was unanimously agreed by all members. Cllr. Timmins stated that engineers in this district have an extremely heavy workload pointing out an extra technical staff member is required to support the current engineers.

Cllr. O' Neill raised the issue, that a large number of estates being built in Blessington come under the jurisdiction of Kildare County Council, he pointed out that household charges and development levies for these households are going back into Kildare County Council's coffers but the residents of these estates are availing of amenities and services in the town, services which are being provided for by Wicklow County Council. Cllr O'Neill felt the money collected by Kildare County Council should be reinvested back into the town. Mr. Gleeson will talk to the planning department about this matter

It was proposed by Councillor Peter Stapleton, seconded by Councillor Edward Timmins and unanimously agreed by all members to adopt the budgetary plan for the Municipal District of Baltinglass for the financial year ending 31st December 2025.

6. To consider the distribution of funding to interested groups of Christmas Light Funding.

Mr. Cullen presented the members with a proposed breakdown of funding to be given to various groups, towns and villages that have submitted applications requesting funding for their Christmas Lights campaigns. He explained that the budget allows for €20,000 per year for festivals/lights, €7.500 is allocated to Festivals which leaves €12.500 for Christmas Lights. Mr Cullen pointed out that due to the high volume of applications this year, €1,000 from the Baltinglass Economic Development fund has been added to the Christmas Lights fund.

Cllr. Stapleton remarked that Ballinglen's figure has decreased from last year by €50 and asked if their amount could be adjusted to €300, this was agreeable by all members present

Cllr. Cronin proposed to agree to the Christmas Lights funding and it was seconded by Cllr. Mulhall and unanimously agreed by all members.

7. Correspondence

Mr Cullen advised the members that he received correspondence from Mr. Marc Deverux regarding Part 8 planning for the Fire stations in Dunlavin and Baltinglass , the correspondence was received too late to be included as an item on the agenda, as part of the part 8 process it must be listed as an item on the agenda. He advised it will come before the members at the next municipal district on the 18th November

8. Any Other Business.

Cllr. Timmins enquired about the possibility of Wicklow County Council taking in charge on the newly constructed town park with a view to getting it open to the public as soon as possible. Mr Byrne advised that Cairn must apply to Wicklow County Council to take in charge of the park and that as far as he is aware this hasn't happened yet

Ms. Theresa O' Brien reiterated to the members that the process has to be started by Cairn in order for Wicklow County Council to take it in charge.

Cllr. Stapleton requested that a Municipal District reception be held to acknowledge and celebrate the achievement of Tinahely Ladies Team on winning ten senior ladies football championships in a row. Mr. Cullen agreed to the request of arranging a reception. Cllr. Cronin welcomed the hosting of such an event pointing out that it is important to support Ladies in Sport. Cllr. Stapleton proposed the date as 22nd November and he will liaise with O' Connors in Tinahely regarding same. All members were supportive of holding the event.

Cllr. O' Neill brought it to the attention of the members that approx. 100 years ago there were two men killed in a plane crash, the plane came down close to the N81 near Hempstown , both men killed were part of the Air Corp. He stated that their anniversary of the tragedy is coming up and he would like to see a plaque erected at the site to mark the occasion. Ms. O' Brien said there is a Wicklow County Council policy for erecting memorials, which must be adhered to. Cllr. Timmins remarked a similar plaque was erected in Baltinglass for a Garda and this was funded by the Members discretionary fund. Cllr. Mulhall suggested getting the West Wicklow Historical society involved in this process.

Cllr. Mulhall stated he has had complaints about the lack of public lighting in Donard. Cllr. Cronin said Dunlavin also has this problem and it's a matter of personal safety at this stage. Mr. Byrne acknowledged that there is an issue with public lights all over the county, he advised that we recently contracted a new supplier, Killory lighting. Cllr. Timmins stated that with the expansion of villages and towns all over the county we would need to formulate some strategy.

Cllr. O' Neill asked for an update on the request at the last meeting to invite the ESB to attend a municipal district meeting to discuss the maintenance issues on the three ESB owned bridges. Mr. Cullen stated they had not been in contact with the ESB regarding this matter, he advised that the District Manger was to check with the Law Department first as to where the Council with are with negotiations on this matter , Ms. O' Brien advised she had been unexpectedly out of the office since the last meeting but advised that she will follow up on this matter and revert back to the members with an update at the November meeting . Cllr. O' Neill reiterated that the Knockieran Bridge is in a bad state of repair.

Cllr.O' Neill also asked that confirmation be sought on the status of the Community Centre in Stratford as he is still hearing conflicting reports about it plus the fact that public money is being spent on this project. Cllr. Glennon informed all the members that Michael Nicholson has already looked into this and issued a response to it.

9. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting has been brought forward to 18th of November at 10:30am.

There being no other business, Cllr. Glennon, concluded the meeting.

Signed: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed: _____
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated: