

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING OF WEXFORD BOROUGH DISTRICT HELD AT 2:30P.M. ON MONDAY 19TH JULY, 2021 REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS.

Presiding:- His Worship the Mayor, Cllr. G. Laffan.

Councillors:- J. Hegarty, G. Lawlor, M. Bell, D. Hynes, L. Kelly, T. Forde.

In Attendance:

Mr. Tony Larkin, Director of Services

Ms. Angela Laffan, District Manager

Mr. Sean Kavanagh, Senior Executive Engineer

Ms. Liz Hore, Head of Enterprise & Economic Development

Mr. Hugh Maguire, Administrative Officer, Environment

Mr. Liam Bowe, Executive Planner

Ms. Helen Meehan, Senior Staff Officer, Housing

Ms. Siobhán Kehoe, Staff Officer,

Ms. Caroline Crowe, A/Assistant Staff Officer.

VOTES OF SYMPATHY

On the proposal of His Worship the Mayor, a unanimous vote of sympathy was extended to the families of the following:

- Mr. Oliver Gaynor, Marian Row and formerly Ballyhine, Barntown RIP
- Mr. Joe Kinsella, Carrigeen Street, Wexford RIP
- Mr. Stuart Van Der Bliake, Rosslare Harbour, RIP

CONGRATULATIONS

Votes of congratulations were extended to the following:

- Shane McCormack, Sprinting Coach at the Tokyo Olympics.
- Wexford men, Billy Walsh and Eddie Bolger, the Olympic U.S. and German Boxing Team Coaches.
- Michelle O'Neill on her appointment as an Assistant Referee for the Olympic Games football tournaments in Japan.
- Kevin Cogley, Sprints and Relay Coach to the National Athletics team for the European U20 Championships in Tallinn, Estonia.
- Senior Men's Gaelic Football Team on their recent win against Wicklow.
- Senior Ladies Football Team on their recent victory over Longford.
- Senior Ladies Camogie Team on their recent victory over Limerick.

- Mr. Brendan Crowley, Wexford Bus for the provision of the Mobile Tourism Information Unit on the Quayfront and to Wexford Borough District staff for facilitating it.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on the 21st June, 2020, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed and signed on the proposal of Cllr. L. Kelly, seconded by Cllr. M. Bell.

Matters Arising

Cllr. L. Kelly expressed his interest to remain on the Wexford Borough District Heritage Committee, stating that he was not aware that he could no longer serve on the committee, once his term as Mayor had ended.

Ms. A. Laffan, District Manager, informed the Members that the Mayor is an ex-officio member of the Committee in addition to two Members as per the structure agreed when the Committee was established. Ms. Laffan suggested this to be adequate representation on a Committee of 8 members.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was agreed on the proposal of his Worship, The Mayor, Cllr. G. Laffan, seconded by Cllr. M. Bell, to refer the matter to the Protocol Committee for consideration and decision.

TOURISM : MID-YEAR UPDATE

Ms. Liz Hore, Head of Enterprise & Economic Development, presented the mid-year tourism update for Wexford to Members. Ms. Hore advised that Visit Wexford and Wexford County Council have been working collaboratively, using digital marketing tools, to promote the county as a compelling tourist destination, with a particular focus on staycations and the domestic market during Covid 19 restrictions.

Ms. Hore was pleased to announce that Wexford are third highest in terms of employment in the industry and reported the highest hotel occupancy rate in the country for the peak summer period at double the national average. Efforts will now be concentrated on maintaining this for the Autumn period, by promoting the outdoor activities on offer. The recent RTE Tracks and Trails programmes highlighting Wexford Walking Trails and other attractions together with the launch of the Visit Wexford App will assist in this endeavour.

The presentation was broadly welcomed by the Members, however Members did express their frustration at Fáilte Ireland's decision to close the Wexford Tourist Office despite the favourable occupancy figures. Ms. Hore shared the Members concerns and advised that Visit Wexford is awaiting a response to recent correspondence seeking an urgent meeting with Fáilte Ireland on the matter. Ms.

Hore welcomed the support of Wexford Borough in providing a temporary solution in collaboration with Mr. Brendan Crowley, Wexford Bus.

Cllr. Maura Bell informed Members that discussions have taken place with the Council's Tourism Officer, Mr. Billy Byrne, around plans to reinstate the Wexford Ambassador Programme in the town for the coming peak tourism period which will complement the information office on the quayfront.

His Worship the Mayor, Cllr. G. Laffan, thanked Ms. Hore for the comprehensive presentation.

REPORTS

HOUSING

The attached report, a copy of which had previously been circulated, was discussed and noted.

The following matters raised by Members were addressed by Ms. Helen Meehan, Senior Staff Officer.

- Derelict/ vacant houses in private housing estates.
- Delays to housing scheme in The Ballagh due to Irish Water change requests.
- Inspections on properties to ensure they are up to standard prior to occupancy by new tenants.
- Facilitating prospective tenants to view properties prior to accepting tenancy.
- Rules imposed by Approved Housing Bodies around play areas in their housing estates.
- Support and requirements for women, subjected to domestic abuse, seeking emergency accommodation.
- Update on vacant property at 17 Talbot Street.

PLANNING

The attached report, a copy of which had previously been circulated was discussed and noted.

The following matters raised by Members were addressed by Mr. L. Bowe, Executive Planner.

- Timeframe for the issue of preplanning reports.

- Recourse to enforcement proceedings or other channels for persons experiencing difficulties with neighbouring properties e.g. odour in the case of piggeries and noise from developments.

DISTRICT ENGINEER

The attached report, a copy of which had previously been circulated, was discussed and noted.

The following matters raised by Members were addressed by Mr. Sean Kavanagh, Senior Executive Engineer:

- Water shortage in Castlebridge and surrounding areas.
- Standard of new road surface at Belvedere Grove housing estate.
- Estate name stones for Shana Court and Whiterock View.
- Overgrown and littered areas at Casa Rio and The Knock.
- Overgrown weeds and Japanese Knotweed at Harbour View, Maudlintown.
- Defective manhole covers outside McClure Meadows, New Line Road.
- Traffic calming measures on Mulgannon Hill.
- Improvement works at 4way stop at junction of Clonard Road and Glenville Road.
- Cutting of grass verges at Drinagh near McDonalds roundabout.
- Derelict/Disused Sites such as Westgate B&B, old Garda Station and former Mooneys on the Quay properties.
- Cllr. L. Kelly thanked Mr. Kavanagh and his staff for the recent grass cutting carried out at Garran Beithe and Radharc an Fhiaigh, Coolcots
- Provision of permanent public toilets on the quay – Current temporary unit likely to be removed mid September.
- Ponding at Belvedere Grove and Liam Mellows Park.
- Installation of fence at Fortunes Field, following safety concerns for children at play.
- Public access to St. John's Graveyard.
- Advance warning sign at Carcur.
- Worn line markings in certain areas around the town.
- National Road Verge Plan, including sightlines at Kitestown Cross.
- Dangerous manholes at Tomcoole Cross.
- Traffic speed survey at Whiterock Hill and Glenville Road.

- Installation of loading bay at Green Street and revisions to junction of Talbot Green/Green Street and Devereux Villas.

Members expressed their concerns with the lack of prior consultation with the Members and local residents in relation to the reordering of the junctions at Talbot Green and Devereux Villas.

Cllr. Lawlor raised the same issue with regard to the lack of information provided in relation to the recent roadworks at Pinewood Estate/Whitemill and stressed the importance of the elected Members being informed to enable them to give an appropriate response to queries from the public.

Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Service, informed the Members that minor safety works do not require the approval of the members. Referring to the Urban Design Manual, Mr. Larkin advised that the Council's objective is to comply as far as possible with the recommended design standards. Mr. Larkin reminded Members of the busy schedule of roadworks delayed due to Covid and to be delivered before the year end and suggested that it is not possible to bring all plans before the Members in advance of the works.

In response to a request from Cllr. L. Kelly to the possibility of a Sunday road closure on Lower Rowe Street to facilitate an adjacent business with outdoor dining, Ms. A. Laffan, District Manager, advised that, while no Section 254 Licence for outdoor furniture at this location had yet been received, a Sunday closure at this location would impact on access for the elderly and less able bodied individuals attending Church Services in St. Iberius Church and Rowe Street Church as the section of Main Street from The Bullring to Rowe Street would also need to be closed to traffic to accommodate such an arrangement. During discussion and a suggestion that the road be closed after church services, Ms. Laffan further advised that it may prove difficult to commit to available staffing resources for this purpose each Sunday and any such overtime would have budgetary implications for the Council.

Mr. T. Larkin clarified that all Section 254 applications require the Directors approval and committed that where any application seeks the closure of a road, no further road closures in the town centre will be considered in advance of the September meeting.

Suspension of Standing Orders

It being 4.30 p.m., on the proposal of His Worship the Mayor it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow for the remaining business on the agenda to be concluded.

COMMUNITY

The attached report, a copy of which had previously been circulated was noted.

Cllr. M. Bell extended congratulations to Healthy Wexford and Health Ireland for providing the recent excellent Social Prescribing course.

In response to query from Cllr. J. Hegarty, Ms. A. Laffan, undertook to seek clarification on the availability of the Small Covid Grants for Clubs and Communities.

ENVIRONMENT

The attached report, a copy of which had previously been circulated, was discussed and noted:

The following matters raised by Members were addressed by Mr. H. Maguire, Administrative Officer:

- Upcoming Mattress Amnesty.
- Bicycle Racks at Beaches
- Traffic Management at Curracloe and Ballinesker welcomed.

Cllr. M. Bell commended the Beach Warden, Mr. Michael Carthy for his vigilance in patrolling the beaches at the weekend.

Following a lengthy discussion regarding a proposal from a national coffee franchise to host a one day promotional event at Ballinesker beach car park, Mr. Maguire agreed to raise the concerns of Members with Mr. G. Forde, Senior Engineer, Environment.

Suspension of Standing Orders

It being 5:15 p.m., on the proposal of His Worship the Mayor it was agreed to further suspend Standing Orders to allow for the remaining business on the agenda to be concluded

LIBRARIES ARTS AND ARCHIVES

The attached report, a copy of which had previously been circulated was noted.

FIRE SERVICES REPORT

The attached report, a copy of which had previously been circulated was noted.

MEMBERS SUPPORT REPORT

The attached report, a copy of which had previously been circulated was noted.

MOTIONS

Biodiversity Plan Min Ryan Park

The following motion was proposed by Cllr. D. Hynes, seconded by Cllr. G. Lawlor, and unanimously adopted:-

“Due to the very deep concerns expressed by several people who regularly use Min Ryan Park in relation to the grass cutting recently undertaken the Park, I would request that in planning further grass cutting, a biodiversity plan would be put in place to prevent a recurrence of this again.”

Rainbow Road Crossing Points

The following motion proposed by Cllr. T. Forde was withdrawn as it had been discussed and adopted at the Wexford County Council Meeting on the 12th July, 2021.

“I ask that this Council seek to develop some “rainbow walks” at different junctions/crossing points in Wexford District”.

Disabled Parking Spaces

The following motion proposed by Cllr. L. Kelly, seconded by Cllr. T. Forde and following discussion was unanimously adopted:-

“As a priority we create new Disabled Spaces to replace the ones lost due to road layout changes and outdoor dining and that the existing ones are accessed in term of their suitability in light of street closures and the presence of outdoor dining that did not previously exist”.

Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services did advise the Members that the current arrangements for outdoor dining were put in place, rapidly, in response to lifting of restrictions and reopening the town for business. These arrangements will be reviewed in September as further restrictions are lifted.

Walls Project

The following motion proposed by Cllr. G. Lawlor, seconded by Cllr. T. Forde and following discussion was unanimously adopted:-

“Following on from the very successful Walls Project in New Ross, Wexford Borough District puts together a similar project for Wexford Town, identifies locations and invites proposals for same”.

Fáilte Ireland Tourist Office

The following motion proposed by Cllr. G. Lawlor, seconded by Cllr. L. Kelly and following discussion was unanimously adopted:-

“In the absence of a Fáilte Ireland Tourist Office, Wexford Borough District works with members of local organisations to act as tourism advisors to the many visitors expected to arrive in Wexford over the coming months”

Cllr. Lawlor thanked Cllr. M. Bell was thanked by Members for her involvement in reviving the Wexford Ambassador Programme as a driving force to assist as tourism advisors to visitors during the coming weeks ahead.

Talbot Green Laneway

The following motion proposed by Cllr. T. Forde was deferred for further discussion at the September Meeting on the recommendation of Mr. Tony Larkin, Director of Service.

“In the interest of the safety of the local community, we ask that this Council act on the request of the residents of Talbot Green, through their petition, to close the laneway where there are regular occurrences of serious anti-social behaviour”.

Acknowledging the petition lodged on behalf of residents of Talbot Green, Mr. Larkin advised that the closure of a right of way cannot legally be done by way of motion and public consultation etc. would be required as part of the statutory process. Mr. Larkin suggested that the public consultation process could be advertised to initiate the process following which the matter can be further discussed in September.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

SIGNED THIS 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

MAYOR OF WEXFORD