

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING OF WEXFORD BOROUGH DISTRICT HELD AT 2.30PM ON WEDNESDAY 23RD MARCH, 2022 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER BLOCK A, WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL, CARRICKLAWN, WEXFORD.

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

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

In Attendance:

Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services

Ms. Angela Laffan, District Manager

Mr. Sean Kavanagh, Senior Executive Engineer

Mr. Gerry Forde, Senior Engineer, Environment

Mr. George Colfer, Executive Engineer, Environment

Capt. Phil Murphy, Senior Marine Officer

Mr. Sean Meyler, Executive Engineer, Special Projects

Mr. Hugh Maguire, Administrative Officer, Environment

Ms. Michele Bridges-Carley, Administrative Officer, Environment

Ms. Siobhán Kehoe, Staff Officer

Ms. Caroline Crowe, Assistant Staff Officer

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on the 21st February, 2022, copies of which had been previously been circulated, were confirmed, and signed on the proposal of Cllr. D. Hynes seconded by Cllr. J. Hegarty.

MINUTES – MATTERS ARISING

Cllr. D. Hynes expressed concern regarding the agreed amendment in the Outdoor Trading Licence Framework, whereby the giving of priority to commercial rate payers within Wexford Borough District is being removed for 2022/2023. Cllr. Hynes suggested that 3 year licences be issued for Outdoor Trading, in line with the Section 254 licence issued for Cornmarket.

Ms. A. Laffan, District Manager advised that the framework had been presented to Members at the meeting of the 21st February, 2022 to afford Members the opportunity to review it, prior to the expiry of the current licences. Ms. Laffan further advised that Expressions of Interest for Outdoor Trading at the 5 locations for the 2022/2023 trading period had been advertised, following Member's agreement to amend the framework, with the closing date for the receipt of applications 25th March, 2022.

Cllr. J. Hegarty asked that the minutes be amended to reflect his request to fill the vacant Adult School Wardens positions at Wexford CBS and St. John of God, The Faythe, before any changes are made to Council policy in relation to the provision of Adult School Wardens. The District Manager noted this request and agreed to amend the Minutes accordingly.

MINUTES OF PROTOCOL COMMITTEE MEETING

The Minutes of the Protocol Meeting held on Monday, 7th March, 2022, a copy of which had been circulated to Members, were adopted on the proposal of Cllr. T. Forde seconded by Cllr. M. Bell.

MINUTES OF WEXFORD BOROUGH HERITAGE SUB COMMITTEE MEETING

The minutes of the Wexford Borough Heritage Sub Committee Meeting, held on the 3rd, March, 2022, copies of which had been previously circulated, were noted.

In reply to a query from Cllr. L. Kelly, regarding a tender being placed for a coffee dock, for the Westgate Centre, Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services informed Members that the work on the centre would be completed in phases, due to budgetary constraints. The priority is to return the ground floor to a useable condition to allow access for the Walking Tours and to deter further vandalism of the centre.

Ms. A. Laffan, District Manager added that the Heritage Officer, Ms. C. McLoughlin is fully committed to opening up the centre fully and that the recent funding secured for a heritage led regeneration plan for Wexford Town, will provide leverage for capital funding applications going forward, including the Heritage Centre.

In reply to Cllr. T. Forde regarding the possibility of the historic town graveyards being open to the public for the summer season, Ms. A. Laffan, District Manager advised that this would be looked at as part of the Town Sergeants duties once the current vacant position has been filled.

S183 NOTICE – TRANSFER OF LAND TO ST. JOHN’S VOLUNTEERS GAA CLUB

On the recommendation of Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services, the attached report in relation to the transfer of an area of land at Pairc Charman to St. John’s Volunteers GAA Club for a nominal fee of €1,000 was unanimously approved on the proposal of Cllr. T. Forde seconded by Cllr. J. Hegarty. Mr. Larkin advised that the transfer is subject to planning permission being obtained for the construction of a clubhouse on the site as outlined in preliminary plans submitted to the Council.

ENVIRONMENT REPORT

1. WEXFORD BOROUGH DISTRICT – COASTAL EROSION AND FLOODING

Mr. G. Colfer, Executive Engineer, gave a brief presentation to Members on Coastal Erosion and Flooding within the Wexford Borough District.

The following matters raised by Members were addressed by Mr. Colfer.

- Protection plan for the dunes at Curracloe and the Raven point to prevent damage in the future.
- Results of dunes protection project previously carried out at Curracloe.

Mr. Forde also advised Members that National Parks and Wildlife has been consulted regarding repairs to the wall at the North Slob.

2. PROPOSED NEW PUBLIC CONVENIENCE ON WEXFORD QUAYFRONT

Mr. G. Forde, Senior Engineer, gave a short presentation to Members on the proposed installation of a public convenience at Wexford Quayfront and conveyed apologies on behalf of Mr. Enda Brennan, Executive Engineer for his inability to attend the meeting in this regard.

The following matters raised by Members were addressed by Mr. Forde.

- Aesthetics of the proposed unit
- Concerns re proposed location of the unit on the quayfront so as to minimise impact on this open amenity space.
- Potential use of vacant Failte Ireland building as an alternative facility
- Timeframe for the unit to be installed.

Following further discussion on the matter, His Worship the Mayor, Cllr. G. Laffan requested Mr. Forde to revert to Members with the final detailed plan and location of the unit for approval prior to installation.

3. FERRYBANK HARBOUR IMPROVEMENTS AND ANCILLARY FACILITIES

Capt. P. Murphy, Senior Marine Officer, gave a detailed presentation to Members on proposed Ferrybank Harbour Improvement works and Ancillary Facilities. Capt. Murphy informed Members that consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the fishermen, had commenced and advised that the proposals as outlined will be subject to the planning process and available funding.

Mr. G. Forde, Senior Engineer, commenting on the ambitious Master Plan, advised that the proposed improvement works will benefit the entire area at Ferrybank and are being presented to Members for information and comment.

During discussion, the following matters raised by Members were addressed by Capt. Murphy.

- Designation of area as a bird sanctuary.
- Additional walking loops and viewing areas.
- Extension of tarmac walking area to the swimming pool.
- Replacement of rope barriers with natural rope to improve aesthetics.
- Provision of adequate working areas for fishermen.
- Added amenity value to the area.
- Access to pier for authorised vehicles only.
- Timeframe for the proposed works.

Mr. G. Forde informed Members that an agreement has been reached with National Parks and Wildlife to provide lighting on the existing walkway.

Mr. Forde emphasised to Members that the proposed new barrier which will restrict vehicular access to the pier by the general public is to be installed in the coming weeks and asked Members to be particularly aware of this change in practice. Following installation, access to the working dock area will be limited to 'authorised vehicles only'. Pedestrians will continue to have access to the pier but will be encouraged to use the proposed new walking loops when constructed.

His Worship the Major, Cllr. G. Laffan thanked Mr. Forde, Mr. Colfer and Capt. Murphy, on behalf of Members, for their comprehensive presentations.

PART 8 – PROPOSED CAR PARK AT OYSTER LANE / CRESCENT QUAY

The attached report in relation to a proposed temporary car park at Oyster Lane/Crescent Quay, a copy of which had previously been circulated, was discussed and noted.

The following matters raised by Members were addressed by Mr. S. Meyler, Executive Engineer, Special Projects.

- Consideration of designated bus parking facilities within the site to alleviate school bus congestion at Talbot Green and for tourist bus parking.
- Temporary nature of the car park facilities.
- Retention of boundary wall at Cinema Lane as far as possible.
- Screening for Lochrann House
- Timeframe for redevelopment of the site by the property owner.

Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services, advised Members that the site is privately owned and has been derelict for a long number of years. He stressed that the preferred use of the site would be a commercial/retail development though this is unlikely to be achieved in the short term. The proposal before Members is designed to address dereliction until such time as the owner is in a position to redevelop the site.

Mr. Larkin confirmed that the car park is expected to be in operation for at least 3 – 5 years but the Council will have the option under the agreement to withdraw from the car park solution at any or such time as the owner is in a position to proceed with the development of the site.

In reply to Cllr. J. Hegarty, Mr. Larkin advised that no lease rent is payable under the agreement with the landowner. Wexford County Council will retain 100% of the car parking income for the first 3 years of the agreement, which will allow the Council to recoup some of its investment in the site, following which the income will be split 50/50 between the Council and the developer.

Following lengthy discussion, on the proposal of Cllr. M. Bell seconded by Cllr. T. Forde, it was agreed to adopt the Part 8 proposal for the development the car park.

Suspension of Standing Orders

It being 4.30p.m., on the proposal of Cllr. G. Lawlor seconded by Cllr. L. Kelly, it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow for the remaining business on the agenda to be concluded.

Cllr. D. Hynes gave his apologies and departed the meeting.

THE 'WALLS OF WEXFORD' STREET ART PROJECT

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

In response to Cllr. T. Forde's request to be considered for the expert Selection Panel to assess artist submissions, the District Manager suggested that it would be more appropriate for the Mayor to represent Member's interest on the panel. Ms. Laffan confirmed that the Council's Arts Officer together with Cllr. G. Lawlor will also represent the Council on this Panel.

In reply to a suggestion from Cllr. L. Kelly to have a local historian included on the Panel, the District Manager agreed to raise this with the Committee.

Ms. Laffan stated that the number of murals to be completed will be subject to approval of the grant application for LEADER funding. Should the grant application not be approved for funding, Ms. Laffan advised that the project will be scaled back in 2022 in line with available resources.

AMENITY, ARTS & RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION GRANT SCHEME 2022

The attached grant listing of funding allocated to applicants under the Amenity/Arts and Residents Association Grant Scheme 2022, a copy of which had previously been circulated, was unanimously agreed by Members on the recommendation of Cllr. T. Forde seconded by Cllr. J. Hegarty.

DERELICT SITES UPDATE

On the proposal of His Worship the Mayor, Cllr. G. Laffan, Members unanimously agreed to defer this item to the April meeting.

2022 ROADS PROGRAMME

Mr. S. Kavanagh, Senior Executive Engineer, circulated the 2022 Roads Programme to Members for their consideration and approval.

At the request of Cllr. J. Hegarty, Mr. Kavanagh undertook to provide a detailed map of the roads included in the programme.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Hegarty, seconded by Cllr. M. Bell, the Draft Programme, as presented, was unanimously adopted.

REQUEST TO RECEIVE DEPUTATION FROM THE HFC BAND RE DUN MUIRE

Ms. A. Laffan, District Manager, informed Members that a request had been received, by email, from the HFC band to attend a meeting to outline to Members their interest in the Dun Mhuire.

Mr. T. Larkin advised that any arrangements in place, legal or otherwise, is a matter between the HFC Band and the Parish Committee and is not a matter for the Council or the elected Members. Mr. Larkin confirmed that contracts for the acquisition of the Dun Mhuire have not yet been signed but it will be a matter for the Parish Committee to transfer clear title to Wexford County Council.

Members agreed with Mr. Larkin's advice and agreed not to receive a deputation from the HFC Band.

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. Michele Bridges-Carley.

- Update on the mediation process regarding the allocation of social houses at Airhill, Belvedere Road.
- Clarification on transfer policy and length of tenancy required before applications for a transfer will be considered by the Council.
- Income thresholds for Social Housing Supports.
- Shortage of private rented accommodation.
- Timeframe for the closure of Talbot Green laneway agreed by Members in November, 2021.
- Criteria on Notice to Quit on H.A.P. properties.
- Need for a Programme of Affordable Housing for Wexford District.
- Ongoing delays in progressing allocation of housing scheme at The Ballagh
- Unacceptable delays in replacement of doors and windows in rented housing units.
- Responses to request for Expressions of Interest for the provision of Emergency Accommodation

On the proposal of Cllr. T. Forde it was agreed that the matter of the ongoing delay in the allocation of the vacant housing units at Belvedere Road be included on the agenda for the April Meeting.

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. T. Larkin, Director of Services.

- Staff shortages due to Covid absences and delays in filling vacant positions which is impacting on services.
- Delays in obtaining replies from Senior Planners.

Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services, acknowledged Member's concerns but advised that the processing of planning applications has to be given first priority at this time

to avoid planning permission going by default. Mr. Larkin confirmed that the recruitment process is progressing as quickly as possible.

Suspension of Standing Orders

The time being 5.30p.m., on the proposal of Cllr. G. Lawlor seconded by Cllr. M. Bell, Members unanimously agreed to further suspend Standing Orders until 6.00p.m. to allow for the remaining business on the agenda to be concluded.

Cllr. J. Hegarty gave his apologies and departed the meeting.

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. S. Kavanagh, Senior Executive Engineer.

- Public Lighting Outage at Clonard Road and Summerhill areas for 2 weeks
- Additional public lighting at Mulgannon
- Timeframe for the Bullring/Cornmarket Regeneration Programme.
- Update on progress for the Outdoor Performance Pavilion on the quay front.
- Confirmation that new pathway at Whitemill includes cycle path
- Update on Active Travel Projects.
- Boil Water Notice in Wexford Town
- Removal of bollards at Mulgannon Hill
- Need for a survey at junction of Tesco and Distillery Road to identify safety solutions
- Safety Audit on overhanging trees at Summerhill
- Update on energising a number of pedestrian crossings.
- Installation of ramps at Ashfield Drive.
- Works required on cycle path at Loreto to access shared surface.
- Outdoor Dining area at Cornmarket.

In reply to Members concerns in relation to the outdoor dining area at Cornmarket, Ms. A. Laffan, District Manager, confirmed that a Section 254 planning licence was granted in 2021 for a 3 year period and that drawings were submitted as part of the application process.

On the recommendation of Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services, Members unanimously agreed to go into Committee to allow for further discussion on the matter of the Section 254 licence. Mr. Larkin advised members of the process and confirmed that legal advice is to be sought in relation to the structure now in situ.

ENVIRONMENT

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

Mr. H. Maguire confirmed the number of reported of illegal dumping cases was down by 40%, compared to same period last year, which is an encouraging trend.

National Spring Clean Week is ongoing with many community groups taking part which is positive and to be welcomed.

Mr. Maguire advised that the Beach Bye Laws will be presented to the next Council meeting with quite a few submissions received during the public consultation period. It is hoped to have the Draft Bye Laws adopted for implementation over the coming season.

COMMUNITY

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

LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES & ARTS

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 SYSTEM

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

MOTIONS

Provision of Public Transport Hub in Wexford Town

The following motion was proposed by Cllr. L. Kelly and seconded by Cllr. T. Forde.

“The Members of Wexford District request the provision of public transport hub in Wexford Town. This should be a component of the Wexford Town Development Plan and should incorporate provision for School, Tourism and Public Transport Buses”.

Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services, suggested a technical amendment to the wording of the motion to reference the Wexford Local Area Plan which will be reflected in the Development Plan which will come before Members in due course.

Based on Mr. Larkin's advice the following amended motion was put and unanimously adopted by Members.

"The Members of Wexford District request the provision of public transport hub in Wexford Town. This should be a component of the Wexford Local Area Plan and should incorporate provision for School, Tourism and Public Transport Buses".

Exemption from Parking Charges for Health Care Assistants.

The following motion was proposed by Cllr. G. Lawlor seconded by Cllr. M. Bell:

"Wexford Borough District moves that all health care assistant workers, be they employed by the H.S.E. or private operators, be exempt from parking charges while in course of their duties attending client's homes".

Following discussion on the motion and concerns raised by Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Service, on the complexities around the operation of such a scheme, a vote was taken which resulted as follows:

In Favour: Cllr. G. Lawlor, Cllr. M. Bell, Cllr. T. Forde (3)

Abstained: Cllr. G. Laffan, Cllr. L. Kelly (2) (pending decision of the SPC).

The motion was therefore declared carried.

Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Service, advised Members that it will be noted that the Members would wish for such an exemption to be introduced, but such a change in policy will be referred to the Roads & Transportation S.P.C., the Director of Service with responsibility for Roads and Transportation and the Roads Department for consideration and decision.

Exemption from Parking Charges – Employees of Wexford Fire Services.

The following motion was proposed by Cllr. T. Forde, seconded by Cllr. G. Lawlor.

"I ask that employees of Wexford's Fire Service be exempt from parking charges in the Wexford District and that we request other Districts in the county to follow suit. "

Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services, questioned the rationale behind the motion and expressed concerns at one branch of Council employees being singled out over

other areas of Council staff and other areas of the public service such as frontline workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, Gardai etc.

Following discussion, Mr. Larkin advised that the motion will be referred to the Chief Executive, Mr. T. Enright, and the Director of Service with responsibility for the Fire Services, for consideration and decision on the matter.

Date for April Ordinary Meeting

On the proposal of His Worship the Mayor, Cllr. G. Laffan, Members unanimously agreed to reschedule the April meeting to 2.30p.m. on Wednesday, 20th April, 2022.

Retirement:

His Worship the Mayor, Cllr. G. Laffan, led Members in wishing Mr. T. Larkin, Director Services, well on his impending retirement after 42 years service and thanked him for his valued advice and support to Members at all times. All Members associated with the good wishes and wished Mr. Larkin a long and happy retirement. Mr. Larkin thanked the Members for their kind remarks.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

SIGNED THIS DAY 20TH APRIL 2022

MAYOR OF WEXFORD.