# Minutes of the New Ross Municipal District Monthly Meeting

**held on the 9th April 2025 at 14:30hrs in the**

**Council Chamber, The Tholsel, Quay Street, New Ross.**

**Presiding:** Cllr Bridin Murphy – An Cathaoirleach

**Councillors:** Cllr John Dwyer – Leas Cathaoirleach

 Cllr Pat Barden

Cllr John Fleming

Cllr Marty Murphy

Cllr Michael Sheehan

**Officials:** Alan Fitzhenry – District Manager

Áine Waters – Staff Officer

Michelle Duffin – Assistant Staff Officer

David Murphy – Executive Engineer (Roads)

Eamonn Hore – District Director

**Remote:** Martina Donohue – Administrative Officer (Housing)

 Eoghan Nolan – Executive Planner

**Apologies:**  Melissa Goff – Senior Staff Officer (Environment)

An Cathaoirleach, Cllr Bridin Murphy, confirmed that the requisite quorum was in place, welcomed all those in attendance and commenced the meeting.

1. **Confirmation of Minutes**
	1. ***Monthly Meeting***

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of March 26th, 2025, were proposed by Cllr Sheehan and seconded by Cllr Dwyer.

*Congratulations*

An Cathaoirleach offered congratulations to Matthew Furlong, retired caretaker from the JFK Arboretum.

Cllr Dwyer offered congratulations to Ger and Bridgid Martin, owners of the Golden Grill who are closing after 35 years in business, the New Ross Search & Rescue team for their bravery in saving a man who had recently jumped into the river, and to Charlie Costelloe, a Waterford man who took part in the rescue.

Cllr Sheehan congratulated the The New Ross and District Pipe Band on their 50th Anniversary.

Cllr Fleming and Cllr Barden offered congratulations to Coláiste Abbáin on winning the South Leinster Schools Senior ‘D1’ Section 2 hurling title.

The District Manager congratulated Michelle Duffin on her upcoming wedding to Shane Cottrell.

*Sympathies*

Cllr Barden offered condolences to the families of James Wall of Newbawn and Declan Hearne of Fethard-on-Sea.

Cllr Dwyer offered condolences to the family of Martin O’Connor of Bewley Street.

Cllr Fleming offered condolences to the families of Kathleen Kehoe and Annie Connors, both of Palace East.

Cllr Sheehan requested he be associated with all the above condolences.

**2. Consideration of Reports and Recommendations**

***2.1 District Managers Report***

The District Manager delivered his monthly report and highlighted the following information;

**Arts & Amenities and Residents Association Grants 2024**

The Arts and Amenity Grants/Residents Association Grants have been decided on by the Members and are attached for final ratification by the Councillors at today’s meeting.

This is a €60,000 investment by the Members of NRMD in Community/Arts/Sporting groups within the District and a €15,000 investment in the upkeep of private housing estates and New Ross Tidy Towns. Thank you to the Councillors and well done to all who received grants.

**EVENTS**

**Flowers for the Magdalenes**

The annual Flowers for the Magdalenes ceremony will take place on Sunday 11th May at 2pm at the Magdalene grave site in St Stephens Cemetery. The NRMD is proud to support this remembrance commemoration, that will see The Magdalene Laundry Flag raised on the day. All Members are invited to attend, and we wish them the best with this important ceremony.

**PROJECTS**

**CCTV**

Al Read Electrical contractors started works yesterday in New Ross. They are delivering the civil and electrical works on the CCTV project and will be in various locations around town for c.4 weeks. Disruption will be very minimal with some footpaths and pedestrian lanes temporarily blocked at times. Educom will then follow on and fit the CCTV infrastructure, along with the ESB supplying power where new connections are required. The plan is to see all works complete by end of May/early June.

**Brennan’s Lane/Shambles**

Works at Brennan’s Lane are at substantial completion with the light fittings installed since our last meeting. The ESB are due in the coming weeks to upgrade and remove poles. We plan to open Brennan’s Lane first and I am delighted to confirm that date is Tuesday 29th April at 5.15pm, as confirmed by the Ministers office. We look forward to welcoming the Minister for Rural and Community Development & Social Protection Dara Calleary TD to New Ross. The Shambles works continue with the steel due to be installed here in late April, and completion is planned for May 2025.

**Duncannon Fort Works**

Works continue at Duncannon Fort and are planned to be completed by May 2025. There are multiple contractors on site currently.

**Motorhome Park**

All documentation for the planned motorhome park is now complete. A Preplanning meeting has been set for this Friday 11th April.

**Quay Street Regeneration**

The District team are currently engaging directly with a number of consultants seeking quotes for the Design & Construction related Consultancy Services tender for Quay Street. The plan is to have a consultant appointed by May to start the detailed design process.

**Sports Capital Pearse Park**

The District Team has met on site at the Park with multiple suppliers seeking updated quotes since our last meeting. This includes equipment suppliers for the teen space and surface suppliers for the MUGA.

**New Ross Skate Park**

This project is “shovel ready” and awaiting a funding opportunity from the Government.

**OTHER ITEMS**

**Walkability Audit**

A Walkability Audit was undertaken in the town on the 10th March. The audit was carried out by a wide range of people of various ages and abilities including disability and older peoples organisations, those caring for people living with dementia, members of the public and Wexford County Council staff. A report has been prepared via the Community Section with the Age Friendly Programme Manager and is attached.

The audit process highlighted a number of key issues to be addressed. While some of the work is for the Council to address, such as dropped kerbs, improving tactile paving and refreshing markings to make clearer, other items such as bollard covers, sandwich boards and signage and planters are causing serious disruption to people living with disabilities and will need to be removed. I am asking all local businesses to remove these items immediately and letters will be issued shortly to explain. Following a brief period to allow for this information to be shared and understood, if any blocking items remain on street, they will be removed by the Council.

This is a countywide approach to support those living with disability and other issues in accessing our main streets safely and we look forward to the support of local business owners in this.

**Proposal to Move Date of May Meeting**

The Cathaoirleach has proposed moving the May meeting forward by one week to Wednesday 7th May at 2.30pm. This is a matter for the members to decide.

Approval of the Arts and Amenity Grants/Residents Association Grants was proposed by Cllr Sheehan and seconded by Cllr Barden.

An Cathaoirleach noted that these grants are often the only funding stream available to some groups and its fantastic to see so many groups do so well from the grant.

Moving the May meeting forward by one week was proposed by An Cathaoirleach and seconded by Cllr Dwyer.

Cllr Dwyer asked that we extend an invitation to the Official Brennan’s Lane Opening to former Councillors Michael Whelan and Anthony Connick.

Cllr Sheehan requested proposed designs for the Norman building for the next meeting, and that we write to the Chief Executive regarding the plans for the Courthouse and bumblebee buildings.

Cllr Sheehan further requested an update on the garden centre and that we undertake an audit of the vacant buildings along the quay front to correspond with owners regarding their condition.

Cllr Barden requested clarification on the contractors carrying out the CCTV works.

Cllr Dwyer queried whether the CCTV would be monitored or recorded, in terms of being proactive or reactive to anti-social behaviour.

Cllr Barden also queried details in relation to the Croí Conaithe scheme and would like to have a report on the grants afforded in the town.

The District Manager gave details of the contractors carrying out the CCTV installation works.

The DM advised that the Special Projects team are aiming to bring design proposals for the Norman building to the next meeting.

In relation to the Courthouse plans, the DM confirmed we can make contact with the Chief Executive regarding same.

On the Garden Centre, the Property Section are actively engaging with third parties to bring this back into use.

With regards the vacant buildings on the quay, the DM and Director have discussed same and plans are in place to contact the owners, noting that Supervalu have recently painted, the Cumas building has had works done, the new mural has lifted the look of the wall there and Grá Linn have opened up.

In response to the CCTV monitoring query, the DM and Director estimated that the CCTV would be monitored and recorded but would request clarification.

The District Manager advised that he would request a report from the Town Regeneration Team regarding the Croí Conaithe grants.

***2.1a Special Projects Report***

Noted.

***2.2 Roads Report***

The Executive Engineer delivered his report before responding to queries raised by the Members.

Cllr Sheehan requested an update on the taking in charge of Parkfield Estate.

Cllr Barden requested a completion date for the bridge works in Little Cullenstown, and if €5million had been awarded for rural road works.

The Engineer advised that he has no update in relation to Parkfield, the Little Cullenstown bridge will be reopened on April 18th, and that he is unaware of any additional funding for rural roads.

The Director confirmed there has been no increase in the Roads budget.

***2.3 Housing Report***

The Administrative Officer delivered her report before responding to queries raised by the Members.

Cllr Dwyer welcomed the email updates sent by the AO, however raised some concerns regarding the differential rents scheme for over 80 year olds, and requested the AO to review our current rents to ensure such tenants have not been overcharged.

Cllr Sheehan requested that the target of 161 housing units to be delivered by 2031 be reviewed as there is plenty land in the District that could be developed, and that there is no Affordable Housing or shared ownership schemes available in the District.

Cllr Barden queried if the discontinued Tenant in Situ scheme would be brought back, Cllr Barden also queried the delay in the Housing Aid for Older People grants, and in the case of extreme medical circumstances, are they prioritised for social housing and who make the decision on such application.

The AO advised she speak to the Rents Team about the differential rents scheme and look at reviewing the rents for the applicable tenants.

The AO will also liaise with the Capital Unit regarding revised housing targets, and that the Affordable Housing Unit are engaging with developers around the County but nothing is confirmed for New Ross as yet.

The AO will check with the grants team regarding the response times to grant applications.

The AO clarified the process of housing allocation and the appeals process.

The AO advised that the Tenant in Situ scheme was paused due to lack of certainty regarding funding, however applications on hand are being assessed and priority will be given to tenants served with impending notices to quit.

A discussion regarding this scheme ensued, and An Cathaoirleach noted the Director of Housing is to provide an update at the main Council meeting on Monday.

The Administrative Officer then departed the meeting.

***2.3a Housing Report – New Ross Only***

Noted.

***2.3b Housing Capital***

Noted.

 ***2.4 Planning Report***

The Executive Planner delivered his report before clarifying certain matters for the Members.

Cllr Fleming welcomed the grant of planning permission for 9 assisted living units but queried the refusal of 20 units in town, and enquired whether the planners could look for further information rather than refusing such developments.

Cllr Dwyer noted that there are potentially two separate IPAS accommodation units operating in town without planning permission, and that the planning authority needs to issue enforcement against such businesses.

Cllr Barden added to Cllr Dwyers comments enquiring what can be done about businesses operating without planning permission.

Cllr Sheehan queried what the planning authority are doing to pursue vacant site owners with a view to develop the site.

The Executive Planner advised that each planning application is assessed on its own merit under the County Development Plan and it’s possible that further information would not have been satisfactory, applicants can make use of the preplanning meeting prior to submission of an application.

With regards businesses operating without planning permission, the Planner advised that Planning Enforcement have a high level of cases ongoing, but any potential issues should be reported to them for investigation.

Director Eamonn Hore noted that in most cases of enforcement, the delay is on the Courts due to the number of adjournments.

Cllr Dwyer asked that someone from Planning Enforcement attend the next meeting and provide updates on cases within the District.

The Executive Planner then departed the meeting.

***2.5 Planning Decisions – Grants***

Noted.

***2.6 Planning Decisions – Refusals***

Noted.

 ***2.7 Libraries Archives & Arts Report***

Noted.

***2.8 Community Development Report***

 Noted.

***2.9 Environment Report***

 In the absence of the Senior Staff Officer, the District Manager offered to take note

 of any queries from the Members and request answers from Environment.

Cllr Barden quired about mobile camera units at dumping hot spots to which Director Eamonn Hore advised they are not yet in operation and to request an update at the main Council meeting.

***2.10 Fire Services Report***

 In the absence of a representative from the Fire Service the District Manager

 offered to take note of any queries from the Members and request answers from

 Fire Services.

Cllr Dwyer enquired about if apartments/flats are checked for fire safety and issued fire certs, and asked that someone from Fire Services attend the next meeting.

Cllr Sheehan asked that we issue a letter to Paul L’Estrange, former Fire Officer, wishing him well in his new role.

The District Manager advised that he has checked with the HAP team and can advise that inspections of accommodation are carried out by Housing Clerks of Work and if issues are noted, they are referred to Fire Services.

The District Manager will extend an invitation to the Fire Service for the next meeting.

***2.11 Members Portal***

Noted.

**3. Business prescribed by Statute, Standing Orders or Resolutions of the**

 **Municipal District Members**

**4. Other Business**

 ***4.1 Arts & Amenities Grant Allocations 2025***

***4.2 Residents Association Grant Allocations 2025***

***4.3 Memo from Director regarding national legislation in relation to IPAS &***

***Displaced persons***

**5. Notice of Motion/s**

 **5.1 Cllr Michael Sheehan**

That this Council calls on the Minister for Integration to refrain from engaging IPAS Contracts in locations where there is a shortage of bed nights and the engagement would deprive the local community of essential services or that the signing of a Service Level Agreement would remove the one last facility, such as a hotel or community hall in the area.

Furthermore, this Council calls on meaningful engagement and communications with locally elected representatives as part of the deliberation process. Upon passage, this motion is forwarded to the Oireachtas members for their public support.

Cllr Sheehan asked for all Members to support his motion, noting that the Kennedy Boutique Hotel is the only town centre hotel, and asked that Wexford County Council and the Government support the motion and not turn this hotel into IPAS accommodation.

Cllr Fleming offered his support for the motion but noted that the building hasn’t operated as a hotel for some years now.

Cllr Dwyer supported the motion and recommended that the Memo from the Director of Planning be publicised to clarify the Council’s role in relation to exempted development decisions.

Cllr Murphy also agrees with the motion, and asked if the memo from the Director is the response to the Members request to attend the meeting.

An Cathaoirleach confirmed that she did request planning to attend a meeting with the Members to offer clarification on the exempted development decisions, and Director Eamonn Hore confirms the memo is the response received in relation to this request, noting that the memo couldn’t be clearer regarding the position.

A discussion ensued.

Cllr Sheehan extended congratulations to Reporter Jessica O’Connor for her reporting on the IPAS centre protest and for how she handled an uncomfortable situation at the protest.

An Cathaoirleach expressed her gratitude for how the Members have dealt with this sensitive topic and handling the matter in a professional manner and asked that the Members show a united front on this matter at the main Council meeting.

The Members unanimously voted in favour of taking this motion to the Main Council meeting.

**6. Correspondence**

6.1 Memo from Director of Planning to An Cathaoirleach and Elected Members of Wexford County Council.

Cllr Dwyer expressed his concerns regarding the condition of buildings in which refugees fleeing war are being housed in.

**7. AOB**

 Cllr Sheehan noted that An Post had reneged on their promise not to close the existing post office, as the staff have now been informed that from the June Bank Holiday the post office will be relocated to Supervalu on the quay. Cllr Sheehan requests support from the Members to seek a meeting with the CEO of An Post to stop this from happening.

Cllr Dwyer added that there is a general malaise in New Ross, noting that there is limited doctors, no primary care centre, no dentists willing to take a medical card recipient, and while the Council makes improvements in town regeneration the services in town are lacking, and as the population continues to grow, there is no housing or services for the population.

Cllr Barden noted the systematic decline in services in the last 20 years, people are shopping online, rather than supporting local businesses, and that Clonakilty are a prime example of supporting local businesses.

Cllr Sheehan agrees with the above remarks but noted the difference in the case of An Post as this decision was made in Dublin, and is not due to lack of local support.

**THAT CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING**

Signed on the 7th May, 2025.

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**Cllr Bridin Murphy**

**An Cathaoirleach**

**New Ross Municipal District**