

BLESSINGTON AND DISTRICT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting

**Held in at St Mary's National School, Blessington
Monday 12th February 2018 at 8.00 pm**

Present: List of members as per the attached

Apologies: List of apologies as per the attached

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2017 were proposed by Patsy Phibbs seconded by David Egar and the minutes of the last meeting held on 8 January 2018 were proposed by Anita Moroney and seconded by Michael Duggan.

Matters arising from the minutes

- The Chairman advised the meeting that no correspondence had been received from Wicklow County Council in regard to a planning permission application for a house at Oak Drive. The Chairman further advised that a letter had issued to Dublin Bus in relation to the Christmas lights damaged on Main Street.

Presentations

The first presentation to members was made by Laura English Disability Officer at Wicklow County Council on behalf of the Disability Federation Ireland.

Among the points made by Laura English during the presentation were the following

- People with disabilities are being encouraged to be part of local communities.
- Launched in 2017 the Wicklow Accessible Tourism Plan aims to promote County Wicklow as an accessible tourist destination.
- Cashel is the only town in Ireland with a Gold Star relating to its access, transport, awareness and social participation for those with disabilities.
- Disability awareness is achieved through a partnership process which costs nothing to run.
- Initiatives are funded by the community and private business with co-facilitated disability awareness training. Blessington will work for disability tourism due to its unique location and attributes.
- We need to focus on planning, transport, accommodation/amenities, exploring, eating and drinking and on how each facet would facilitate disability tourism.
- The way forward is to have a public meeting and engage with the schools.

The second presentation of the night was given by Fiachra Garvey and Brian O'Regan on behalf of the West Wicklow Festival.

- This event was founded in 2017 by Fiachra Garvey and saw over 350 people attend three sold out concerts at Russborough House.
- The 2018 Festival will feature internationally acclaimed artists such as Julian Bliss, Philip Higham and the award winning Benyounes Quartet.
- This year there will be six events, five programmed and one free event.
- The free event will be in the Hippodrome at Russborough.
- The Festival will run from Thursday 17 May to Sunday 20 May 2018 and the evening performances will be at 8pm.
- There will be a church performance at 4pm on Sunday 20 May.
- Brian O'Regan advised the meeting with regard to different levels of sponsorship being sought for the Festival. Brian also advised of rates of advertising ranging from €200 plus VAT upwards. Members were left to spread the word in regard to the sponsorship being sought and to support by attendance at the event with their family and friends.
- The Forum will refer details of sponsors to Fiachra and also arrange for a presentation to be made to the West Wicklow Business Network.

The meeting following the presentations proceeded to deal with the following matters.

Enterprise Town Presentation

The Secretary asked members to consider ways in which the Municipal District could recognise the achievement of winning Leinster and being an All Ireland runner up in the Bank of Ireland Enterprise Towns Event last year. It is intended as soon as possible to recognise the achievement by way of a plaque or bench or other suitable symbol and members were left to consider what would best honour the achievement.

Community Awards Scheme 2018

The Secretary advised of the announcements by Wicklow County Council of applications being open for community grant awards of up to €2000 and community prize awards of up to €10,000. Community grants relate to small projects with low running costs while the community pride awards are in respect of large projects that make a significant impact and difference to the lives of people in their communities relating to such as community wellbeing, communities reaching out to new communities, community tourism and community enterprise.

The closing date for applications is 12 noon on Thursday 29 March 2018.

Tidy Towns

Members were advised that the Sunday morning meet up has recommenced at 9am and everybody is welcome. The Chairman passed around the Main Street Rota which is also back each Sunday morning.

Members were happy to learn of Blessington Tidy Towns being first in the Sustainable Waste and Resource Management Award from Wicklow County Council and also first place in Large Town Main Streets award.

Dame Ninette de Valois

The Chairman advised that an application for funding has been submitted to CWP and that this application for funding relates to barriers, street flags, flagpoles and placards. The festival is scheduled for 29 June, 30 June and 1 July 2018 and will be centred at the Tramway Theatre with other events at the Library and The Square.

Greenway

The Chairman advised that there was no further information to be advised to members in relation to the objections raised last year but that there is a hope that these objections can be resolved very shortly.

Housing Development

Jason Mulhall advised of the Forum having discussed the proposed housing developments with Councillors, the business community and others on 17 January and that follow up letters had issued to Kildare County Council and Wicklow County Council. Acknowledgement has been received from Kildare County Council advising that information will be forwarded.

Members were advised of the process for SHD applications and that at this point in time only Windlynn Developments has a pre application to An Bord Pleanala for a development on the Kilmalum Road.

Town Team

Members were advised that the initial first meeting of the Town Team took place on Tuesday 30 January 2018 at the offices of Wicklow County Council. Members present were from the Forum, Wicklow County Council, the Greenway and the Business Network. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 27 February and the conclusions to date are

- Time will determine if it is worthwhile pursuing.
- Forum to remain the main body for Blessington
- Use it as a body to communicate directly with WCC and try to influence decisions and be part of the decision making process.

Christmas Lights outcome.

Members were advised of Cash Receipts and Payments in respect of the Christmas lights 2017. It was pointed out that the estates collection last year raised €3,925 and that local businesses have to date contributed €5,470. Members were advised that an amount of €3,000 is outstanding from Wicklow County Council and a couple of other local sponsorship amounts having been pledged.

St Patricks Day Parade.

Members were advised that Michael Doyle, Michael Duggan and the Chairman are members of the St Patricks Day Committee and that meetings planning the event are continuing on a weekly basis. It was explained to members that the parade is covered by the Forum insurance and in this regard members were unanimous in advising that street barriers must be used for the duration of the parade.

CCTV

Members were advised that the consultant's report in regard to the way forward on CCTV for the town is expected to be available for the next meeting by which time it will also have been discussed with the local Gardai and WCC.

Town and Village Renewal

The Secretary advised members that plans are being finalised at present in regard to Health Check, gym equipment, street seating, Sli na Slainte routes/interpretative signs and links to our new web page.

A.O.B

- Eamon Kelly and Carmel Cashin raised the shelving of the N81 project. Members felt that this item should have been listed centrally on the Agenda for discussion. Following a brief discussion it was agreed that contact should be made with Shane Ross the Minister for Transport and Tourism.
- The Chairman advised members that just before the meeting commenced an email had been received from Gerry O'Neill with a request that it be read to members. The Chairman read the email. Some members felt it was not a matter for a Forum response, the email was left to the Executive to deal with.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Proposed: Carmel Cashin
Seconded: Pat Conboy

Signed: _____
Chairman