

BALTINGLASS & DISTRICT FORUM

Meeting Minutes
Thursday 5th February 2009

1. Attendance: Mai Quaid, John Vernon, Fran Quaid, Mary Vernon, Ann Patterson, Noel Lyons, Pat Byrne, Phyllis Flanagan, Paul McGowan, Cathy O'Toole, Liam MacGabhann, Anne Leigh, Paul Gorry, Vinny Gethings, Orla O'Sullivan, Simon Murphy, Cait Clerkin, Assumpta O'Neill, Chris Murray and Maria McCormack.

2. Apologies: Noel Doody, Mick Browne, Andrew Pender, Mick Cogan, Ken Browne, Lena Byrne (who has requested leave of absence for family reasons). Assumpta O'Neill, Chris Murray and Maria McCormack indicated that they will be attending later.

3. Introduction The Chairperson welcomed all the members attending.

4. The Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th January were taken as read. Acceptance proposed by John Vernon and seconded by Paul Gorry.

5. Matters arising There were no matters arising.

6. Correspondence

Letter from Wicklow Co. Co. received on 22nd January acknowledging receipt of our submission re the planning permission sought by Gillespies.

A communication received from Wicklow Co. Co. to-day acknowledged receipt of our letter of 15th Dec. 2008 requesting road signs and said that it had been referred to the area engineer for a response.

As yet no reply has been received from J. Kenny of Bus Eireann re bus services in the town. However, responses were received from the following.

Noel Dempsey – Minister for Transport noting the contents of our letter.

John Gormley – Minister for the Environment acknowledging receipt of our letter.

Billy Timmins – T.D. stating that he is aware of the situation and has been in correspondence with the Minister of Transport.

A letter has been received from the Baltinglass Cultural Group requesting the Forum's participation in the St. Patrick's Day Parade being organised by that group. The consensus was that the Forum should participate and the Chairperson asked for ideas on how this could best be achieved.

7. Financial Report

The Treasurer reports a balance of €1,120 in the Credit Union and receipt of subscriptions from 13 members so far.

The only outstanding expense currently being the notional payment to be made to the Rev. McCullagh in respect of lighting and heating for use of Stratford Lodge for meetings.

The Chairperson took the opportunity to thank the Tidy Towns committee, in the person of Simon Murphy, for their most generous gesture in clearing the Forum's outstanding account for printing.

Reports from Sub-committees

8. Roads and Transport

It will take a few more weeks for the sub-committee to compile their list of routes.

9. Social Group

The format of the Forum Newsletter has been discussed and it looks likely that it will be a quarterly issue containing among other items a schedule of local bus services, local church services, and closest cinema programmes and any other data which would encourage residents to retain it as a point of reference. The price of the newsletter is expected to be €0.20.

The Social Group are still actively seeking suitable premises for the proposed Shop (“The Forum Outlet”) and Community Centre/ Youth café.

10. Fund Raising

The sub-committee met in January and Liam McGowan has submitted a comprehensive summation of their situation at the present and towards the future.

A copy of the summation is attached.

Arising from the report it was queried what exactly was meant by “social inclusion” and the explanation was that no group or sub division of the community should feel excluded by reason of ability, religion, education or ethnic background.

After inconclusive discussion on the subject of a Table Quiz later in the year Simon Murphy suggested a Junior Quiz night or a combination of Senior/Junior participants drawing representation from the various estates within the community.

11. Any Other Business

The new Lalor Centre is now up and running and the Parish Council have kindly offered the use of the older facilities as a Parish Centre for meetings etc. for any local voluntary group. The Forum has also been offered the use of the new Lalor Centre.

A vote was taken to decide whether the Forum should move its meeting venue and they opted to do so to the Parish Centre.

The Chairperson asked that a letter expressing our gratitude be sent to the Rev. McCullagh for all the months when we availed of Stratford Lodge.

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Forum will take place on 5th March 2009 at 8.00 p.m. in the Parish Centre (the old Lalor Centre).

Following meetings are scheduled as follows:-

2nd April 2009	7th May 2009	4th June 2009
3rd September 2009	1st October 2009 (AGM)	
5th November 2009	3rd December 2009	

Baltinglass Forum

Fundraising sub group meeting - 20th January

Present: Maria McCormac, Eamonn Horan, Liam Mac Gabhann & Assumpta O'Neill (tele conference)

This was the first meeting of some members of the Forum fundraising sub group, initiated immediately after they realised they had been co-opted onto the group. It is therefore not necessarily representative of the whole sub group, as we were unsure who others were and felt it was important to get an initial meeting convened pending the membership being distributed,

We understand our task to be the exploration of fundraising options relating to the business of the forum and to this end discussed what the forum might fundraise for, and the implications & consequences of following up on any options.

(1) Running costs of the forum

Basic running costs include hall hire, public liability insurance, some printing (though email reduces this) & stamps/paper for correspondence.

The development and updating/administration of a web site is a potential further cost that needs to be considered.

Standard local fundraising initiatives are probably the only fundraising avenue for this. For example, a race night once a year, etc. Although, for the Web site, it may be possible to liaise with IT students who might be interested in designing/developing the Web site as part of their course projects.

There are implications for fundraising locally to aid our running costs. We are competing for the same pool of money as every other community group (including those represented on the forum). Individuals already trying to fundraise for their own group may have some concerns about another group in the pool, which may understandably affect their commitment to fundraising for the forum. Furthermore, this may raise the-ongoing question — who are the forum and what do they do for Baltinglass? Any fundraising event would probably have to be attractive as an event in itself, rather than rely on charitable participation. Such an event may also be useful to showcase the forums activities to date and profile the group.

(2) Particular purpose

Many ideas have been thrown around in relation to how the forum can influence the development of Baltinglass town and District. Some of these have been about establishing physical buildings or developing different services. Examples include, establishing an Arts Centre or Youth café. These kinds of purposeful initiatives maybe able to attract funds outside of local's pockets, in the form of government and government body grants.

There are usually preconditions for applying for many of these grants, e.g. being legally constituted as a company and/or co-operative, or at least formally associated with such a group. This is not always the case however, though chances are lessened if groups are more loosely constituted.

One of the principal implications for going for this type of funding is the need for a dedicated group of individuals to put an application together and then if successful to run with the project, where ever that takes them.

(3) Developing the forum as a group

It is possible to consider the forum itself as a development, worthy of being funded. We have thought of two possible ways this might be considered.

(a) Establishing the forum as a social inclusion initiative

It may be possible for the forum to get funding to develop Baltinglass and District as a socially inclusive community, with the forum as the medium to do this. This might involve community research, establishing the extent of social inclusion and challenges to improving this. This could either include or be followed by a project that develops social inclusiveness via the medium of the forum.

There are implications with fundraising for this purpose. The forum would no longer function as it does now and would have to undergo some mindset changes and change our approach to community development, e.g. initially outreaching into the community and being more interconnected with other groups, as opposed to another isolated group.

Again there are implications for workloads and roles that people may take on if we decide to take this approach.

(b) Establishing the forum as a social inclusion initiative including bricks and mortar

Whereas (a) means changing the thinking and focus of the forum, it does not necessarily get them involved in capital funding or property management. It is possible to take this idea one step further and seek to achieve similar aims, yet have a physical building(s) as a means to bring diverse groups and aspects of social inclusion together.

Briefly, this might entail getting funding to buy/have donated and develop suitable premises that could be multifunctional and be the beacon for our social inclusion initiative.

An example might be Rathcoran House or the Old Girls School which could be set up as a co-operative with buy in from groups, societies, markets, HSE, court diversion, FAS, etc. depending on the premises and the overall purpose of the initiative.

There are similar implications for this approach, though the commitment may be more long term and set in stone (literally), because of the acquirement of premises and setting up a legally constituted group.

Our recommendations

- For the forum to discuss these options and others that might arise in the discussions and agree what options we would like to follow up with.
- If necessary, the sub group might be asked to explore a favoured option further
- Consider where the options might overlap with the submissions and work of the other two sub groups, to avoid duplication and confusion with whichever option(s) we go for.
- If options are agreed and implications taken on board, then volunteers could be recruited so follow through with specific agreed initiatives.