**MINUTES OF FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF BIRR HELD ON MONDAY 12TH FEBRUARY, 2024 IN BIRR CIVIC OFFICES, WILMER ROAD, BIRR AT 4.15 P.M.**

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| **MEMBERS PRESENT:** | **Cllrs P Ormond, J Carroll, E Dooley,****J Clendennen, C Claffey and J Leahy** |
| **IN ATTENDANCE:** | **Ms A Dillon, DOS, Mr J Mitchell, SEE, Ms Frances Byrne, Manager TFI Local Link, Mr B Pey AO Community & Enterprise OCC, & Ms D Molloy, Meetings Administrator** |

1. **Adoption of Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 8th January, 2024**

On the proposal of Cllr Leahy and seconded by Cllr Claffey the Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Birr MD held on the 8th January, 2024 were adopted.

1. **Matters Arising from January Meeting.**

There were no matters arising.

1. **Laois Offaly Local Link Presentation – Frances Byrne Manager TFI Local Link Laois Offaly**

Ms Frances Kelly Manager TFI Local Link Laois Offaly gave a presentation to the Members in relation to the Local Link and advised that TFI Local Link Laois Offaly is one of 15 nationwide Transport Coordination Units for the NTA. It is a charitable body with a voluntary Board of Directors who represent local authorities, OLDC, PPN, ETBs along with community representatives. She advised that there are two types of service being provided within the Municipal District area i.e. Door to Door services and Regular Rural Services.

The Members thanked Ms Byrne for her hard work and acknowledged the positive impact that the service is having on rural communities, and raised the following:

* The Members welcomed the increase in user numbers but also felt that the service could be better advertised to make the public aware of the great facility that it is, particularly now that it has expanded and is linking up with bus and rail services in other towns.
* The Members raised the challenges facing private operators in the areas where Local Link is operating as the fare system with Local Link is cheaper, Ms Kelly acknowledged that this is an issue and advised that a scheme needs to be put in place to bring both fare structures in line with each other.
* The Members outlined the need for bus stops to be provided in areas so that people know exactly where the bus is departing from, they were advised that this is currently under review but that three different criteria have to be met for the funding of a bus shelter. At the very least she advised that a bus stop sign will be provided at each location The Members advised that a bus shelter in Birr town is badly needed but consideration needs to be given as to where the best place would be to locate same and safety would always be the overriding factor.
* The Members enquired about the further expansion of the service and were advised that one of the most challenging factors to the expansion of the service was lack of bus drivers.
* The Members enquired about nighttime service as taxis are hard to get in rural areas, they were advised that it is hard to get drivers to work at night due to anti-social behaviour and the taxi regulator also maintains that there are enough registered taxis to service the areas, but the difficulty is that some of these taxis are no longer operating, particularly at night time.
* The Members enquired as to how often the service will be evaluated and if there is any fear that the funding for the scheme would run out, Ms Kelly advised that while the service is being utilised and expanding it will continue.

 **4 Draft Offaly Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2024- 2029 – Brian Pey, A.O. Community & Enterprise**

Mr Brian Pey, A.O. Community & Enterprise Section OCC gave a presentation to the Members in relation to the Draft Offaly Local, Economic and Community Pal 2024 -2029. He advised that we are currently in Stage 3 of the process which involves presenting the final drafts to the MD’s for consultation. The process will then move to Stage 4 by presenting the final plan to the full Council meeting for adoption and finalising the plan for submission to the Minister and publication by the end of April 2024.

The Members thanked Mr Pey for his presentation and acknowledged the huge volume of work that had gone in to preparing this Draft Plan and the vast amount of public consultation that was undertaken. The Members welcomed the plan as they feel it is extremely important for Community Groups to have this plan to refer to when making applications for funding. They enquired if it was expected that any further changes would be made to the plan before being put before the full Council for adoption, Mr Pey advised that it was not likely. The Members enquired if there would be a midterm review of the plan carried out and were advised that this would be likely but when that would happen would be decided by the LCDC and the SPC.

1. **Community Grants 2024**

The Members were advised that under the Community Grant Scheme 2023, 42 organisations were funded at a cost of approx. €51,000, and that to date 20 of those organisations had drawn down their funding for 2023. It was agreed that the remainder of the groups would be contacted and advised that if the funding was not claimed by March 31st, 2024 then offers would be withdrawn.The Members agreed to proceed to advertise the 2024 scheme based on the same criteria used for 2023.

1. **Correspondence: Request a meeting with HSE Reps re Respite Services in Birr CNU.**

The Members expressed their disappointment with the current situation in relation to Respite Care Services at Birr Community Nursing Unit and the frustration they were feeling in relation to the lack of information received from the HSE. The Members agreed unanimously to request the HSE to attend an emergency meeting either remotely or in person with the MD Members to discuss the issue.

The Meeting then concluded.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**CATHAOIRLEACH MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR**

**DATE:**