**MINUTES OF APRIL MONTHLY MEETING OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF BIRR HELD ON MONDAY 8TH APRIL, 2024 IN BIRR CIVIC OFFICES, WILMER ROAD, BIRR AT 4.00 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 P Dermody, EE, Mr Mark Mahon SE Environment Section OCC, & Ms D Molloy, Meetings Administrator.** |

1. **Photograph to mark the 125th Anniversary of Local Government – 1899 Minute Books**

To mark the 25th Anniversary of Local Government the minute book of the Birr Rural District Council from 1899 to 1903, was presented at the Meeting, kindly facilitated by the Offaly Archivist. The Members perused the minute book and photographs were taken to mark and record the occasion.

1. **Adoption of Minutes of Meeting in Committee held on 11th March, 2024**

On the proposal of Cllr Leahy and seconded by Cllr Carroll the Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Birr MD held on the 11th March, 2024 were adopted.

1. **Adoption of Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 11th March, 2024**

On the proposal of Cllr Claffey and seconded by Cllr Ormond the Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Birr MD held on the 11th March, 2024 were adopted.

1. **Matters Arising from March Meeting.**

There were no matters arising.

**5. Birr Playground Update**

The Members stated that there was some confusion in relation to upgrade works that were required to be carried out at the playground in Birr town and who would be funding them. Mr Pat Dermody E.E. advised the Members that there was a budget available to maintain the nine council owned play facilities within Birr MD but it was generally insufficient to replace playground pieces. He advised that it was the intention to carry out some works in the playground in Birr in 2024 and an inspection had been carried out to determine what is required. The Members thanked Mr Dermody for his update and raised the following:

* The Members noted that the playground in Birr had been built in 2006 and money had been raised by a Committee at the time towards same. They stated that no significant investment had happened since save for maintenance and some vital repairs. They enquired if the Council could formulate a plan to include some equipment and facilities for children with additional needs, and seating is required for parents for when their children are using the facility. They also stated that they are aware of the need to try and combat antisocial behaviour and perhaps CCTV could be looked at to control same.
* It was noted that a new playground committee has been formed and that they have circulated a questionnaire to the schools in the area to determine what is required from the playground and this would form a wish list for the amenities to be provided.

The Executive advised that further funding may be available through the Community Recognition Fund or the LCDC and this will be explored. The Members asked that the work would be carried out expeditiously as the playground upgrade is badly needed and noted that Birr playground is a public playground and works will be funded with public monies.

1. **Environment, Climate Action and Rural Water Report**

Mr Mark Mahon, OCC presented a report to the Members in relation to Environment Climate Action and Rural Water. He advised that the inaugural OCC Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 was officially published in March in both Irish and English. The Members thanked Mr Mahon for his report and raised the following:

* The Members noted that the civic amenity site in Birr is not being used to its full potential by the public and enquired if anything could be done to raise awareness of the facility and the services provided there. Mr Mahon advised that he had discussed this matter with the Awareness Officer in OCC and they were exploring what can be done through a campaign, renaming, signage etc. to encourage the public to make full use of the facility.
* The Members *r*aised the ongoing concern in relation to littering and fly tipping and strongly felt that any cases that are taken to court need to be publicised widely. Welcomed the new CCTV legislation for use in waste and litter and hoped that once it can be used nationwide will be a big deterrent to offenders. The Members also enquired if this could also be used for public order offences and were advised that separate legislation would be required for garda offences.
* The Members acknowledged the great work being carried out by the Council liaising with community groups in relation to the upkeep of burial grounds and how important it is to have a plan in place and to support these groups The Members acknowledged the great work being carried out by volunteers in maintaining burial grounds to an excellent standard. The Members advised that the funding being supplied to community groups for upkeep of burial grounds is not sufficient to cover the costs being incurred, Mr Mahon advised that the funding available is determined by the annual budget and is primarily meant for the purchase of equipment so groups can maintain the areas and not have to pay Contractors to do so.
* The Members welcomed the re-establishment of the Rural Water Monitoring Committee and the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2024-2026 and felt that this was a very positive development for Group Water Schemes.
* The Members raised the issue of dangerous structures and dangerous trees within the MD and were advised that the issue of trees does not fall within the remit of the Environment Section but is looked after by the MD. In the case of Dangerous Structures, they are assessed by an Engineer, and there is a process that is then followed to fix same.
* The Members expressed their frustration with the lack of communication and information that is being provided by Uisce Eireann both to themselves and the public at large in relation to outages and other issues.
* The Members raised the issue of Green Schools being rolled out into Secondary schools perhaps as TY projects as well as Primary Schools, Mr Mahon advised that he would discuss this with the Green Schools Officer but remarked that post covid the take up levels even in Primary schools has reduced.
* The Members raised the possible issue of a location for bottle banks in Kilcormac and also enquired if any benefits have been seen from the new Deposit Retention Scheme.
* The Members welcomed the Community Climate Action Fund and enquired as to what sort of projects would be funded from this and would it include energy upgrades e.g. solar panels. The Members felt that it is important that Community Groups are educated in relation to what is required to make an application for funding. It was noted that the The Growery in Birr are looking for a new location and it brings great benefits to the local community so is this something that could be addressed through the Climate Action Fund. Mr Mahon advised that at the expiry date for submissions, Offaly County Council received 24 applications through the on-line application portal. Those applications totalled approximately €850,000 which indicates the huge community interest in the scheme. All completed applications are currently being reviewed, and as the scheme is over-subscribed by almost 100%, an evaluation committee will be convened to score each application before being sent to DECC for final approval. Any unsuccessful applications will have a chance to apply for funding under Phase 2 of the Community Climate Action Fund once that it released by DECC. 11 applications were received in the Birr MD area.

1. **Community Grant Scheme 2024**

The Members were advised that of the 42 applications received under the 2023 Community Grants Scheme that only 9 groups had not claimed their grant to date. These groups have been advised that if their claim is not received before the 30th April, 2024 then the offer of funding will be rescinded.

The Members were advised that 40 applications had been received to date under the 2024 Scheme and after considering all the applications in line with the criteria of the scheme and cross-checking funding with other agencies it was proposed to allocate an overall fund of €39,050 to these groups.

On the proposal of Cllr Ormond and seconded by Cllr Leahy the draft proposal for Community Grants allocation for 2024 was agreed.

1. **Any Other Business**
2. Members were advised that a request for funding from the GMA reserve fund had been received from the KDA towards the Hub in Kilcormac to cover a shortfall of €60k for a project funded by the Irish Just Transition Fund, the overrun in expenditure is due to the increase in costs of construction.  On the proposal of Cllr Leahy and seconded by Cllr Claffey it was agreed to provide funding of €60,000 for the Hub in Kilcormac."
3. The Cathaoirleach advised that it would be necessary to change the date of the May meeting scheduled for May 13th, 2024 and it was agreed that the May monthly meeting would be held on May 27th, 2024 at 10.00 a.m. It was also agreed to have a photograph taken to mark the end of the term of the current MD Members.

The Meeting then concluded.

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

**CATHAOIRLEACH MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR**

**DATE:**