**MINUTES OF JANUARY MONTHLY MEETING OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF BIRR HELD ON MONDAY 8TH JANUARY, 2024 IN BIRR CIVIC OFFICES, WILMER ROAD, BIRR AT 3.30 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. Emma Nee-Haslam, Ms. Caroline Conway Ms. Maureen de Forge of Birr Festivals Committee, Ms Sally O’Leary Arts Officer OCC and Ms D Molloy, Meetings Administrator** |

1. **Adoption of Minutes of Meeting in Committee held on 11th December, 2023**

On the proposal of Cllr Carroll and seconded by Cllr Claffey the Minutes of the Meeting in Committee of Birr MD held on 11th December, 2023 were adopted.

1. **Adoption of Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 11th December, 2023**

On the proposal of Cllr Ormond and seconded by Cllr Leahy the Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Birr MD held 11th December, 2023 were adopted.

1. **Matters Arising from December Meeting.**

There were no matters arising from the December Meeting.

1. **Birr Festivals Committee**

Ms. Emma Nee-Haslam, Ms. Caroline Conway and Ms. Maureen de Forge on behalf of the Birr Festivals Committee attended the meeting to brief the Members in relation to the Vision, Mission and Goals of the Committee and to give an overview of the work carried out by the Festivals Committee which currently encompasses five festivals in the year and the level of funding that is required to run each festival. While they advised that they appreciated the level of monetary and practical support provided to them from the MD in the past they were disappointed with the level of funding they received under the 2023 Community Grants Scheme. They advised that they hoped to appoint a fundraising manager, and had applied to the Arts Council for funding for same.

The Members thanked them for their presentation and commended the great work carried out by the Committee. The Members advised that they are happy to support the Festivals but that there is a limited amount of discretionary funding available to the MD each year for Community Grants and there are always a large amount of applications from voluntary groups within the MD for support. The Members enquired if perhaps the Festivals Committee could raise financial support through Corporate Sponsorship and perhaps would be able to access funds through the Just Transition Fund. It was also agreed to investigate if funding may be available through Failte Ireland under the Destination Towns Funding.

The Chief Executive and DOS thanked the Festivals Committee for attending the meeting and for the huge amount of work carried out in the District promoting culture and the Arts.

1. **Birr MD 2023 Year in Review – John Mitchell, SEE**

Mr John Mitchell, SEE, Municipal District of Birr delivered a review to the Members and the Chief Executive on the work carried out within the Municipal District of Birr for 2023. Mr Mitchell thanked the members for supporting projects that required additional funding. The Members thanked him for his review of Birr MD 2023 and raised the following:

* The Members congratulated the staff and Executive of the MD for the amount of work carried out in the previous year and the high quality of the work carried out by our own staff, for example the works at Broughal National School. The Members enquired if it is possible to reduce our reliance on Contractors and recruit more staff in to the Council instead.
* The Members enquired about the work being carried out on playgrounds and felt that much more needed to be done to bring them up to standard. They enquired about looking for additional funding to equip playgrounds with facilities for children with additional needs. Mr Mitchell acknowledged that further work needed to be carried out and that playgrounds are important for tourists and locals alike. He advised that some funding was made available to community run playgrounds through the LCDC, and that perhaps capital funding for Council managed playgrounds could be sought from external sources.
* The Members enquired about the Winter Maintenance programme within the MD and who decides what time and how frequently the roads are gritted and what roads are gritted. Mr Mitchell advised that the programme is managed by four duty engineers on alternating weeks and salting is decided on in consideration of the prevailing conditions. The details of the Winter Maintenance Plan are available on the council website and roads covered are contained within that. He did advise that in addition to this, where possible, mini-gritters are deployed for use on local blackspots.
* The Members enquired as to when the Local Improvements Scheme would be open for accepting new applications and were advised in the Birr MD area we have enough applications at present to see through the current year.
* The Members enquired about the new patching unit we acquired and if it as effective and efficient as the previous units, Mr Mitchell advised that it is an excellent piece of equipment that carries out an excellent quality repair very efficiently. The Members also enquired about cleaning of signage and maintenance of water cuts to prevent flooding.
* The Members enquired about the blueprint for the Rectory Lands project and the Northern and Southern Distributor Roads, Mr Mitchell advised that it was hoped to progress the Rectory Lands Masterplan to the first phases of implementation and Northern Distributor road in 2024 subject to funding and the Southern Distributor road would be dependent on the commencement of the Primary Care Centre project and an application to the Department for further funding.
* The Members enquired about the distribution of facilities within the MD and expressed dissatisfaction that the area office in Ferbane was closed when there are currently two council offices effectively in Tullamore and asked that the Executive would consider this as the closure of the Ferbane office has had a detrimental effect on the area.
* The Members enquired about the cycleway that was provided under Active Travel in Birr at Coach Road as this was to be reviewed.
* The Members enquired if the Council prepare Traffic Management plans for festivals or if they are to be arranged by the committee holding the festival, they were advised that groups carrying out activities in public spaces need to have such plans prepared but they are quite costly so would not be funded by the Council, however the Council will work with groups to provide them with information of what is required.
* Ms Anna-Marie Delaney, Chief Executive, OCC complimented the Municipal District of Birr for the huge volume of works carried out during 2023 between projects completed and currently in progress. The Chief Executive thanked the Members for their support during 2023 and to John Mitchell and staff in the Municipal District.

Ms Ann Dillon thanked the MD staff and Members for all their hard work and co-operation throughout the year and thanked the Chief Executive for attending the meeting.

The Meeting then concluded.

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

**CATHAOIRLEACH MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR**

**DATE:**