

**MINUTES OF JULY MONTHLY MEETING OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF
BIRR HELD ON MONDAY 13TH JULY, 2020 IN ARAS AN CHONTAE,
TULLAMORE AT 5.15 P.M.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs E Dooley, P Ormond, J Carroll
J Clendennen, C Claffey and J Leahy

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms Ann Dillon A/Director of Services, Mr John
Mitchell SEE, Mr John Cunningham Housing
Services and Ms D Molloy, Meetings
Administrator.

Adoption of Minutes of Annual Meeting held on 18th June, 2020.

On the proposal of Cllr Carroll and seconded by Cllr Ormond the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Birr MD held on 18th June, 2020 were adopted.

Adoption of Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 18th June, 2020.

On the proposal of Cllr Clendennen and seconded by Cllr Claffey the Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Birr MD held on 18th June, 2020 were adopted.

Housing Progress Report:

Mr John Cunningham SEE presented a housing progress report, the Members thanked him for his report and raised the following:

- In relation to the Retrofit Project when is the survey likely to be complete and when will the works be carried out. Are the works only on social houses and will all OPD houses be included, has Offaly secured its allocation from the fund. Mr Cunningham advised that it was unlikely that the works would be carried out in this year and it was only for social housing tenants. He further advised that we hoped to carry out works on approx. 150 houses.
- Welcomed the houses at Beechgrove, Belmont and wondered what the completion timeframe is, Mr Cunningham advised that it was hoped to tender before the New Year and looking at starting construction in March 2021.
- The Members raised issues in relation to the HAP scheme as they felt that rents were now more expensive and some of the properties are not meeting the proper standards, can this be looked at?
- Welcomed the DPG work completed and enquired as to the approximate cost of the works carried out? Mr Cunningham advised that all jobs are individual so the costs vary on each one.
- Expressed concern in relation to the length of time it is taking for direct construction to produce houses, what is the plan for acquiring properties or provision of houses in the next 18 months. The Members stated that the Rectory Lands need to be made a priority for housing. What is the situation with vacant properties in towns and villages can we try to acquire them to provide housing. Mr Cunningham advised that there was a lot of work being done in the background in relation to vacant properties.

Housing Estate Management:

The Members were presented with a report outlining Proposed Housing Estate Projects for 2020 in the MD area, they were advised that there is total fund of €60000 to be spent over 11 projects. The Members welcomed the proposal but raised the following:

- The Members understood that at their February meeting it had been agreed to spend this funding on footpaths in the estates, Mr Mitchell advised that the Members had been asked to submit projects for consideration, five of the eleven projects are for footpaths and the remaining projects are very small.
- Expressed concern that some projects had started in the previous year and had not been completed so would like assurance that these projects would be completed.
- Review the issue of parking in housing estates as lots of people are parking on footpaths as there is not adequate parking and this is causing a lot of damage to the footpaths. Welcomed the additional parking being provided in Ashbrook and McAuley Drive in Birr.
- The Members enquired if there is a secondary list of proposals for projects in case any further funding was to come available.
- Is the money available adequate to complete all the projects outlined and how soon are they likely to commence, Mr Mitchell advised that works would commence as soon as possible and the most urgent projects would be completed first.
- The Members raised the issue of anti-social behaviour in estates and unkempt houses and would like a report at a future meeting from relevant personnel to outline what is being done to address these issues

Public Realm Review and Birr Destination Town

The Members were advised that the Public Realm and Destination Town project were being combined and that the Paul Hogarth Company were reviewing the Public Realm Plan. This work has commenced and they had already met with interested parties and committees. It was envisaged that Birr would be sensitively maintained as a historic town and attention would be paid to visitor numbers in Birr Castle and how we can enhance the town to entice those visitors to stay in town. We are awaiting further updates and a workshop from Bord Failte. It is the intention that as the project moves on groups that were previously involved with the Public Realm would be further consulted. The Members were advised that a set of questions in relation to the project had been prepared and that these would be circulated to the Members for their response.

Rectory Lands Update:

The Members were advised that the Masterplan for the above lands was still being prepared, it was noted that along with housing the Draft plan included the Primary Care Centre and no further updates in relation to this had been received from the HSE as with the onset of Covid 19 the focus shifted to other matters. An update has now been requested again and it was hoped that this might be available for the September meeting. The Members noted that this land provided great opportunities to provide parking given its close proximity to the town centre and hoped that this would be considered within the plan.

Covid 19 Update

Ms Ann Dillon addressed the meeting and advised the Members that public counters have reopened in the Aras and Birr MD daily from 9.30 am to 1.00 p.m., she further advised that another announcement was expected from Government in the coming week and this would determine whether opening hours would be extended further. She informed the Members that there was a big demand from services since reopening.

Correspondence for Noting:

The Members noted the correspondence that was sent on foot of the last meeting in relation to Just Transition to ESB CEO and Minister Eamonn Ryan. The members also noted the correspondence from Birr Christmas Lights Group in relation to a funding proposal and agreed to discuss same further at a later date.

The Meeting then concluded.

SIGNED: _____

CATHAOIRLEACH

MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR

DATE: