

**MINUTES OF JUNE MONTHLY MEETING OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF
BIRR HELD ON THURSDAY 18th JUNE, 2020 IN ARAS AN CHONTAE,
TULLAMORE AT 2.00 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, and Ms D Molloy, Meetings
Administrator.

**Adoption of Minutes of Meeting in Committee held remotely on 21st
May, 2020.**

On the proposal of Cllr Claffey and seconded by Cllr Dooley the Minutes of the Meeting in Committee of Birr MD held remotely on 21st May, 2020 were adopted.

**Adoption of Minutes of Monthly Meeting held remotely on 21st May,
2020.**

On the proposal of Cllr Ormond and seconded by Cllr Carroll the Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Birr MD held remotely on 21st May, 2020 were adopted.

Roads Report:

Mr John Mitchell SEE presented a roads update, the Members thanked him for his report and raised the following:

- Welcomed the resurfacing works carried out and congratulated staff on the great standard of work.
- Enquired if the probing work was completed on the peat based roads and if we were able to secure funding, are we in a position to be able to identify where it needs to be spent?
- Welcomed the commencement of the LIS but wondered how many jobs would be taken off the list for Birr area with the funding now available, Mr Mitchell advised that is was proposed to carry out 5 LIS this year.
- Enquired when the work was likely to commence on Green St in Birr, could this be carried out as soon as possible while there is reduced activity in the area, very disappointed that it is taking so long, would this all be incorporated in to the Destination Town project? Mr Mitchell advised that he was in discussions with interested parties in relation to same and hoped to proceed to tender very soon.
- Footpaths are in very bad repair, is there any funding for same or is there an audit of footpaths carried out to determine what is needed if any money became available under the new programme for Government. Mr Mitchell acknowledged that an audit needs to be completed.
- Enquired about the works to be carried out at the Camcor Bridge in Birr at the river walk and when would this work be carried out?
- Overgrown hedgerows and verges, could these be prioritised for maintenance at junctions, Mr Mitchell advised that this would be carried out as a safety measure.

- The Members raised the ongoing issue of maintenance in the burial grounds in the MD and asked that they would be given an update from the Environment Department in relation to this, and if there was a plan in place to work and engage with local communities to work together. Mr Mitchell advised that he would talk to the Environment Section in relation to same.
- Thanked Mr Mitchell for work carried out to sort out the Wifi at Cloghan Church and stated that in the current climate it is essential that we help to provide connectivity and access for both SME's and the public both through technology and through our roads, and providing safe walking and cycling facilities.

Ms Dillon informed the Members that a representative from each MD was required to attend a meeting to discuss the future allocation of LIS funding within the county, the Members proposed that the Cathaoirleach Cllr Leahy should attend the meeting on their behalf.

Covid 19 Update

Ms Ann Dillon addressed the meeting and advised the Members that it is proposed to open up public counters on a limited basis with effect from the 29th June, 2020. She advised that the cashdesk/motortax in the Aras building and public counters in the three MD offices would be first and queue management protocols would be in place. It would be possible to make appointments to meet with other members of staff e.g. housing and planning but reiterated that it was still preferable to contact staff remotely to carry out your business if at all possible. She advised that in order to adhere to social distancing guidelines it would not be possible for all staff to return to the offices so remote working would also be continuing. She advised that the click and collect service being operated by the Library service was working well and it was planned to roll this out to other libraries in the coming days. In responding to a query from the Members Ms Dillon advised that planning inspections are being carried out. The Members thanked her for her report and welcomed the phased reopening of council buildings and acknowledged that all other services are continuing remotely

Birr Destination Town Project Update

Ms Ann Dillon, thanked the Members for pledging the match funding from LPT required to allow this project to progress. She advised that there had already been a number of meetings of the Staff Project Group and also of a smaller group who were involved with organising the review and updating of the Public Realm Plan for Birr. She advised that it was felt that this plan was a very good starting point for the project and that the original consultants The Paul Hogarth Company had been engaged to update the plan and that following initial conversations with them they were hoping to travel to Birr the following day to start their work and they would consult with interested parties and local stakeholders along with the elected members during the process and envisaged that a presentation would be given to the Members at the July meeting. She further advised that Bord Failte intended to hold an online workshop in late June or early July to indicate what they have envisaged for the project and to show new ways of orientation and broader interpretation through signage. The Members thanked her for the update and raised the following:

- Welcomed the project and are delighted that the funding is in place to progress same, but wish to stress the importance of involving the interested parties, stakeholders and members at an early stage in the process.
- Enquired as to the timeframe for the project and will works in Castle St/Green St be incorporated in to this plan, very anxious that these works would get underway as soon as possible. Ms Dillon advised that the timeframe for the completed project was 24 months.
- Stressed the importance of any works being inclusive for people with disabilities and could some of the bodies representing people with disabilities be included in the consultation process
- Importance of sorting out the issues of parking and traffic flow throughout the town and try to encourage visitors to the castle to visit other areas of the town as well as try and promote other areas of interest in the area e.g. Slieve Blooms, Lough Boora, the Shannon etc.

Town and Village Renewal 2020

The Members were advised that there are two announcements imminent from the Dept. in the coming days of new schemes under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. It was envisaged that one of these schemes would be aimed at providing assistance in supporting economic recovery in rural areas as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic and that the second one would be for projects which require assistance for project development work in order to reach full delivery readiness. She advised that the Dept. were carrying out a workshop which would give more clarity on the schemes The Members welcomed the proposed announcements and raised the following:

- Would these have to be new applications if the criteria changed, or are the applications we have already received being looked at. Would it be possible to get a copy of the presentation being given by the Dept. to be able to familiarise themselves with the process, and get some clarity on it?
- Important to get applications in but hard to apply as the goalposts keep changing it is hard for communities to understand the process. Felt that the regulation of street furniture would be a good start as it would allow business to be carried on outside of premises and therefore increase capacity, although it was pointed out that this could cause a hindrance for people with disabilities or pedestrians so would have to be thought out very effectively.

Ms Dillon advised that once the guidelines were received from the Dept. she would circulate them to the Members and this should provide some clarity.

Just Transition START Engagement Process

The Members were advised that June 12th was the closing date for receipt of applications and that overall 150 projects had been submitted. OCC made 22 submissions and 8 of these were specifically for the Birr area, they had also partnered with other stakeholders on projects. It was observed that a large amount of community applications had been submitted. The Members raised the following:

- The Members requested that a letter be sent to the CEO of the ESB co-signed by the Cathaoirleachs of OCC and Birr MD seeking clarification on the decision by the ESB of making a €5 million contribution towards the Just Transition Fund

and what purpose this contribution was to be used for, was it to be used solely for the West Offaly and South Longford areas which were the areas most affected by the decisions in relation to West Offaly and Lough Ree power. They also requested that a joint letter be sent to the Minister for Climate Action, Communication Networks and Transport Minister Ryan and that both letters be circulated to all local Oireachtas members

- That all local politicians should look to meet with Bord Na Mona officials to try and determine what is needed and wanted for the workers within the areas if funding is available. The Members stressed that it is important to get a full inventory of what the applications made are and try to ensure that where jobs are being lost that this is where the largest investment should be given.
- Enquired if an application was made in relation to the roads built on peat foundations in order to try and secure funding to try and rehabilitate same.

Schedule of Municipal District Works

The Schedule of Municipal District Works for 2020 was agreed by the Members at the Monthly meeting held on 21st May, 2020, but as this meeting was held remotely the Schedule needed to be formally adopted. On the proposal of Cllr Ormond and seconded by Cllr Carroll the Schedule of Municipal District Works for 2020 was adopted.

Any Other Business

The Members requested that an update in relation to Rectory Lands in Birr be placed on the Agenda for the July meeting.

The Members agreed that the date for the monthly meetings to be held would revert back to the second Monday of each month.

The Meeting then concluded.

SIGNED: _____

CATHAOIRLEACH

MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR

DATE: