

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF BIRR
HELD IN BIRR CIVIC OFFICES, WILMER ROAD, BIRR AT 4.30 P.M. ON
MONDAY 14th JANUARY, 2019**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs J Carroll, P Ormond,
J Leahy, E Dooley and S Maher

APOLOGIES: Cllr Clendennen

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. Frank Heslin, DOS, Mr John Mitchell
A/SEE, Mr John Cunningham Housing Services
OCC and Ms D Molloy, Meetings Administrator

Adoption of Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 10th December, 2018.

On the proposal of Cllr. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. Leahy the Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Municipal District of Birr held on 10th December, 2018 were adopted.

Housing Services Progress Report

Mr John Cunningham, SEE Housing Services presented the current report to the Members. The Members thanked him for his report and raised the following:

- The Members welcomed the proposals for housing to be provided at the Rectory Lands in Birr but expressed a wish that proposals for other amenities should be included at this site also, the Executive advised that there are no final plans at this stage but that some sketches are being prepared to incorporate housing and amenities in the area.
- The Members enquired as to the status of the current Tenant Purchase Scheme and were concerned that some tenants who are living in properties acquired under Part 5 are not being afforded the opportunity to purchase their houses, they were advised that this is a decision that was taken at national level and not a local decision but that reps could be made to the Dept on their behalf.
- Welcomed all the works carried out in various estates under the Estate Management Programme and enquired if the issue of parking in Bulfin Park could be addressed, the Members were advised that finance was not extended to cover this work but it could be looked at further in the future. The Members enquired if Beechgrove Estate in Belmont could be included in the 2019 Enhancement Programme.
- The Members expressed concerns in relation to the amount of tenants being given notice from the HAP Scheme as properties are being sold, it was acknowledged that this is a problem and the Members were advised that a HAP finder service has been established as a joint initiative between Laois and Offaly and this can help locate properties suitable for HAP tenancies.
- Welcomed the new housing units that are being provided but enquired if there was any provision being made for Affordable Housing Schemes or the possibility of serviced sites being made available in the area, Mr Cunningham advised that there is an Affordable Housing Scheme operational in larger cities but cannot be implemented in Offaly yet. The Members also enquired if a different type of housing mix could be looked at for estates e.g. 2 and 3

bedroomed houses and apartments as opposed to just 3 beds, and also concerned that 5% under the Part V scheme is too low.

- What is the position in relation to vacant properties in urban areas and village centres, are people taking up the incentives to bring these properties back to habitable standards? The members were advised that the Council are carrying out an audit of vacant units in town centres trying to identify vacant properties and approach the owners in relation to same.
- The Members welcomed the work being carried under the DPG Scheme and also acknowledged the shorter timeframe it is taking to return void houses to allocation stage.
- The Members enquired about the housing of Syrian Refugee families in Offaly and were there any families to be housed in Birr, and if so were they being prioritised for housing ahead of people on the current waiting list?. Mr Heslin advised that 25 families have been allocated to Offaly for settlement and that 8 of these families were housed in Tullamore before Christmas. This is a multi-agency settlement programme and is funded by the Dept. of Justice, it is an ongoing process.

Any Other Business:

1. The Members raised concerns in relation to the purpose of the cutaway bogs when Bord Na Mona cease and are concerned that if there is no definite plan for then that the could be used for anti-social behaviour e.g. dumping. It was agreed to bring the matter to the Planning SPC for consideration.

The Meeting then concluded.

SIGNED: _____

CATHAOIRLEACH

MEETINGS ADMINSTRATOR

DATE: