

**MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF BIRR
HELD REMOTELY ON MONDAY 8th MARCH 2021 IN BIRR CIVIC
OFFICES, WILMER ROAD, BIRR AT 4.00 P.M.**

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms Anna-Marie Delaney CEO, Mr Stephane
Duclot, DOS, Ms Ann Dillon, SEO, Mr John
Mitchell SEE, Ms Monica Cleary, SEO Housing
OCC and Ms D Molloy, Meetings Administrator.

The CEO Ms Anna-Marie Delaney introduced and welcomed Stephane Duclot as the new Director of Services with responsibility for the Municipal District of Birr. She also thanked Ms Ann Dillon who had carried out the role of A/DOS for the past year for her great work. The Members all welcomed Stephane Duclot to his new role and said they looked forward to working with him. They also thanked Ann Dillon for all her hard work in MD and wished her will in the new role she was moving into. Mr Duclot thanked the Members for their warm welcomes and said that he was looking forward to working with them to help Birr MD flourish. The Cathaoirleach also thanked the CEO for attending the meeting.

Housing Progress Report

Ms Monica Cleary, SEO Housing Services OCC presented a report to the Members. She further advised that housing were currently preparing the plan for the Rectory Lands and they hoped to have a provisional plan to bring to the Members for the next meeting:

The Members thanked Ms Cleary for her report and raised the following:

- The Members wished to express their appreciation to the staff of the Housing Section for the great work that they were doing under very difficult circumstances due to Covid. This was having a huge impact on housing stuck and as there was no construction no Part V properties were becoming available. There is huge demand for rental properties and very few available and rental prices are increasing. They were concerned that the process of Direct Construction is too slow and the Department will have to address this.
- The Members enquired as to when the retrofitting programme would commence, would it be when the Covid restrictions are lifted? Also enquired as to how long this process would take?
- Concerned about the amount of vacant houses and the length of time it is taking to return them to stock to allocate again, Ms Cleary advised that it was very difficult to get Contractors to carry out the work.
- The Members acknowledged the Repair to Lease scheme as being an excellent scheme but it needs more finance per unit to make it viable for landlords to engage. Concerned about the amount of vacant and derelict houses that there are in our towns and villages and what can we do to try and address this situation, could we explore a policy to provide penalties on vacant sites and

houses. Ms Cleary advised that they were currently meeting with planning to develop a policy on derelict houses and they would need to get funding to develop this programme.

- The Members expressed concern in relation to the DPG Schemes and that this was an area that needed to be looked at, Ms Cleary advised that they were meeting with the Dept. to try and change the current funding methodology as this does not suit Offaly.
- Welcomed the proposed Local Authority Direct Construction Projects and also the turnkey housing projects. Enquired about the 34 houses at McAuley Drive were they being provided in in one phase or a number of phases?
- Raised concerns in relation to HAP tenancies and the condition of some of the properties, Ms Cleary advised that inspectors are visiting HAP properties to inspect them.
- Enquired about the Affordable Housing Scheme that was being addressed by the current Minister and Ms Cleary advised that this this scheme had not yet been adopted.
- Enquired about the current number of applicants for housing accommodation in the Birr area in comparison to 12 months ago, Ms Cleary advised that there had been no significant variation in the numbers.
- The Members welcomed the introduction of the Community Grant Scheme under the Housing Estate Management and Enhancement Programme 2021, but acknowledged that anti-social behaviour is still a huge problem in some areas. Ms Cleary advised that a new anti-social behaviour policy was being adopted and that they were liaising closely with the Gardai in relation to same.

Adoption of Minutes of Meeting in Committee held on 8th February, 2021

On the proposal of Cllr Carroll and seconded by Cllr Claffey the Minutes of the Meeting in Committee of Birr MD held on 8th February, 2021 were adopted.

Adoption of Minutes of Monthly Meeting held on 8th February, 2021.

On the proposal of Cllr Clendennen and seconded by Cllr Dooley the Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Birr MD held on 8th February, 2021 were adopted.

Matters Arising from the Minutes of the February meeting:

There were no matters arising from the February meeting.

Birr MD Overview 2020-2021 presentation by Mr John Mitchell District Engineer

Mr John Mitchell SEE Birr MD gave a presentation to the Members outlining works and projects carried out in the Municipal District in 2020-2021. The Members thanked him for his very informative presentation and acknowledged the huge volume of work that had been carried out despite the restrictions of Covid and they raised the following:

- In relation to the survey carried out on the peat based road where do we go from here with the information that we have gathered and will money be made available to rebuild the roads? Also speed tests that have been carried out in a number of areas, have these been reviewed?

- The Members raised concerns regarding safety at Lumcloon Cross and enquired if anything can be done to improve this junction?
- In relation to the Water Quality Rehabilitation Programme after the cessation of peat production is there a plan in place to survey the rivers to see what has been left behind and what can be done about the results? Will funding be made available to clean the rivers?
- Recognised the great work that was being carried out under Urban and Village Renewal enhancing towns and villages but that derelict buildings within our towns still remains a huge problem. Also concerned that the utility providers are slowing down the projects and delaying the completion of the schemes.
- Raised the issue of dumping at Clonohill graveyard in Birr and when is CCTV likely to be put in place. Also acknowledged that dumping and dog fouling were becoming major problems, and could more bins be provided around the town for people to dispose of bags when they do clean up after their dog
- Welcomed the great work that was carried out under the Active Travel plan in relation to footpaths and cycle ways, but that there was a lack of focus on public transport and bus stops in towns and villages, could a transport plan be devised to look at these area?

Mr Mitchell advised the Members that he would not address their questions now but would answer them at the Roads Programme meeting planned for Friday 12th March.

Any Other Business

1. The Members enquired if Water and Environment Services could be asked to attend the April meeting as they had not had a chance to ask any questions on their report when it was presented at the February meeting.
2. Ms Ann Dillon advised the meeting that Covid cases are increasing in the Birr area and asked that everyone would follow the current covid guidelines to try and reduce the numbers.
3. The Members requested that a letter be sent to local Oireachtas members in support of our local newspapers and media and requesting that state aid be made available to them to allow them to remain viable. The Members wished to acknowledge the importance of the local media and newspapers.
4. The Members requested that a letter be sent again to the HSE in relation to information regarding the location of the proposed Primary Care Centre, the meeting was advised that an announcement was imminent in the next week or so on the proposed location.

The CEO acknowledged the great work that was being carried out in the MD, and thanked Ms Dillon once again for her contribution over the past year.

The Meeting then concluded.

SIGNED: _____

CATHAOIRLEACH

MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR

DATE: