

# **Minutes of Meeting of Library Services, Culture and Biodiversity Strategic Policy Committee held on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2025 in Thurles MD Offices and via Zoom**

## **Present:**

**Councillors:** Cllr Andy Moloney (Chairperson), Cllr Siobhan Ambrose, Cllr Phyll Bugler, Cllr Kay Cahill Skehan, Cllr Niall Dennehy, Cllr Shane Lee, Cllr Pamela Quirke O'Meara

**Sectoral Interest:** Theresia Gushychlbauer, Martin Quinn

**In Attendance:** Damien Dullaghan, County Librarian  
Pat Bracken, Library Service  
Marie McMahon, Museum Curator  
Melanie Scott, Arts Officer  
Ann-Marie Fleming, Biodiversity Officer  
Caitriona O'Connor, Royal Sites of Ireland Officer

**Apologies:** John Connors, Cllr John Crosse, Cllr John Fitzgerald, Brendan Keogh, Cllr Louise Morgan Walsh, Sean O'Farrell, Aislinn O'Keefe,

Councillor Moloney opened the Meeting and welcomed those in attendance.

## **Item 1: Minutes from previous meeting, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2025**

Proposed: Cllr Niall Dennehy

Seconded: Cllr Kay Cahill Skehan

**Matters arising:** None

## **Item 2: Presentation on Draft Tipperary Festival Strategy 2025-2029 by Melanie Scott**

Melanie Scott commenced her presentation by stating that the strategy defined Tipperary County Council's role and the ways in which it would support the development of festivals

and events. It articulated how Tipperary County Council would work with local communities to ensure festivals and events were inclusive, demonstrated best practice, and could flourish. The first strategy which was extended to 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic achieved several goals including encouraging F&E organisers to utilise local creatives and businesses and develop a directory of contact details for local F&E. It also ensured that the Arts Office targeted key digital influencers related to events and festivals to broaden the appeal and promotion of Tipperary.

- Investment in festivals to enable them to develop strategically
- Delivering targeted one-to-one and group training for Festival & Event organisers across a range of topics
- Development of a dedicated Tipperary Festivals brand and promotional campaign showcasing Tipperary as an attractive place to live, work, and visit
- Working in partnership to develop and share guidelines and toolkits for F&E organisers
- Development of online festivals landing page
- Maintaining a central point in the Council for festivals information and coordination

Melanie Scott then addressed the new strategy. She stated that *it* defines Tipperary County Council's role and the ways in which it will support the development of festivals and festive events over the coming five years. She further stated that the strategy vision was that *Tipperary's citizens and visitors enjoy a vibrant cultural life through engagement with and participation in a diverse range of quality festivals and festive events*. The overarching ambition of the new strategy is to ensure that Tipperary is identified as a vibrant festival destination and that the quality and diversity of our festivals calendar is recognised and valued. The council has identified four pillars under which it will work to encourage, support and sustain festivals that are created in Tipperary to grow and develop. These pillars are: Supporting, Sustaining, Advocating and Communicating.

The supporting pillar will look to Maintain the FES scheme and work with each Municipal District to direct supports to strategically important festivals to assist them to develop. The advocating pillar will look to improve data collection to understand more fully the value, economic and social impact of Tipperary's festivals and festive events. The communicating pillar will look to Highlight the Council's support of festivals and support the marketing efforts of funded festivals. In addition, the Arts Office will work with local, national tourism and development agencies to promote Tipperary festivals more widely. The sustaining pillar will look to encourage and support festivals to expand funding sources, facilitate training to enable festivals to identify and reduce their environmental impact and develop an online application process for the FES. Finishing her remarks, Melanie Scott stated that the level of

funding support allocated increased by 52 per cent since 2018. In addition, there has been a 38 per cent increase in demand for funding from €453,655 in 2018 to €625,745 in 2025.

Damien Dullaghan stated that although Sean O'Farrell was unable to attend the meeting and had sent on his apologies, he had submitted the following question via email in advance of the meeting:

*Can you also please clarify if all the Festivals are organised by voluntary initiatives or does the County Council organise the Municipal District and Premier Festivals? In Action 2 (Advocacy) of the 29 Actions it is good to read about 'integrated approaches'. Then I wonder if there is an opportunity to create a Festival that integrates - Climate Change - Community Wellbeing (see: PPN wellbeing statement) and the Sustainable Development Goals and multi-culturalism?*

In response, Melanie Scott stated that Tipperary County Council did not have the resources to directly run festivals but that the strategy allowed for festivals to be supported by the Council. She further stated that if a community group put forward a viable proposal regarding a Climate Change type of festival, Tipperary County Council would provide support for this.

Cllr Andy Moloney thanked Melanie Scott for her presentation and stated that the work which had gone into the previous strategy helped groups to deliver excellent festivals.

### **Item 3: Overview of Draft Library Development Plan**

Damien Dullaghan gave a presentation on the work to date on the new Library Development Plan. He gave a brief overview on the current position of the Library Services and the services offered to the public. In 2024, the Library Service:

- Issued 454,000 Books
- Recorded 380,000 visitors
- Spent €280,000 (€1.69 per capita) on books (in 2016, spent €125,000 – 78 cents per capita)

He then gave an outline of the steps which will take place during the preparation of the development plan which were:

- Introductory Presentation to SPC
- Initial draft presented to SPC
- Final draft presented to SPC
- Final plan adopted by members

Damien Dullaghan then outlined the key goals for the Library Development Plan which will underpin the document. These are as follows:

- New Library for Clonmel

- Refurbishment programme for Branch Libraries
- Increase online usage
- Improved Book fund
- Culture of reading and literacy development
- Develop unique content – Tipperary Studies
- Sustainability and Climate Action
- Social Media
- Library is civic focal point for community
- Libraries continue to be cultural venues
- Harnessing new technologies - Maker Spaces - 3D Printing – Robotic Technology

Cllr Moloney thanked Damien Dullaghan for his presentation and said that he looked forward to reviewing the draft strategy.

**Item 4: Update on timeline for Tipperary Biodiversity Action Plan**

Ann-Marie Fleming gave an update on the Biodiversity Plan. She stated that very good progress had been made and that the plan was being finalised. She stated that it was anticipated that the plan would be brought before the Plenary Council in Q4, 2025 for adoption. She further stated as part of the process, SPC members needed to be given an overview of the plan as part of the consultative process. Ann-Marie Fleming stated that she would be ready to hold a workshop with SPC members in July but that the next SPC was not scheduled until September. Cllr Moloney stated that it was his view that a workshop could take place in July and that SPC members should be allowed to attend in person or online. A discussion took place amongst members and it was agreed that a workshop on the Biodiversity Action Plan would take place in July.

**Item 5: Overview of the Library Digitisation Project by Pat Bracken**

Pat Bracken, Senior Executive Librarian gave an update on the Library Digitisation project. He outlined how Tipperary County Council Library Service has been working in cooperation with the Environment section of the organisation to digitise graveyard / cemetery registers across the county. When digitised these registers would be hosted on the Tipp Studies Digital platform and the physical registers would be returned to the Environment section.

Also, in relation to the digitisation project the secretaries of the four divisional GAA Boards across Tipperary were contacted to request permission to digitise and present online match programmes or team sheets which each board may have produced over the years. Permission was granted by each Division, with the work being undertaken by staff in Tipperary Studies, who would scan items already in their collection, with a view then to extending this reach to items in private collections, which could be scanned and returned to their owners. Permission had been previously granted in 2018 to publish online senior divisional final programmes from each division, but this new initiative covers all grades from Minor to Senior level. It is envisaged that this collection will go live in late 2025 with representatives of each divisional board present at the launch. funding.

Cllr Moloney thanked Pat Bracken for his update.

#### **Item 6: Update on the Arts Service by Melanie Scott**

Melanie Scott, Arts Service gave an update on the Arts Service. She commenced with an update on the Bealtaine Festival. She stated that Tipperary County Council Arts Office and Tipperary Library Service once again worked together to deliver a full and varied programme of almost 150 events and activities right across the county, the vast majority of which were provided free of charge. For Bealtaine 2025, the Arts Office curated a diverse programme of live performances, workshops & exhibitions. 2025 was the 30th Bealtaine festival nationally. Funding provided by the Arts Office enabled 10 professional artists to deliver 5 socially engaged projects resulting in 10 live events, including performances of a newly written play, an open mic night, a mini festival and a visual arts and poetry exhibition as well as the creation of a stop motion animation with specially composed music and visuals created by the participants. In all, 44 workshops and sessions took place in resource settings, community and civic spaces, and galleries. Audiences of almost 600 people attended the live showcase events and the stop motion animation has been published on vimeo and which was available to view in Nenagh Arts Centre. Supports to the artists also included providing continued professional development and networking opportunities.

Melanie Scott also stated that an important aspect for the Arts Office is bringing events to people in hospitals, nursing homes and day care settings – making a show or programme accessible to people who wouldn't otherwise have an opportunity to participate or get involved. This year the Arts Office funded music, theatre and reminiscence events in 14 care settings. The live Music on Tour programme brought 11 professional musicians to perform in seven settings, including residential care homes, three hospitals, day care and community centres.

Cllr Kay Cahill-Skehan stated that this year's Bealtaine Festival was a wonderful event which was hugely popular and connected with the local community. She thanked Melanie Scott for all the work involved.

Martin Quinn stated that the Bealtaine was a fantastic and wide-ranging festival. He said that great credit was due to the Culture team.

Theresia Gushychlbauer thanked Melanie Scott for her efforts on Bealtaine. She asked if it was just the Arts Office who ran the festival. Melanie Scott stated that the festival was a collaboration between the Arts Office and the Library Service.

Cllr Pamela Quirke O'Meara thanked Melanie Scott for the update and stated that the Bealtaine Festival had been a real success.

Cllr Phyll Bugler thanked Melanie Scott for the update. She asked if it would be possible to run a bus to some of the events next year. She stated that there were older people who missed out on event because they had no way to get there. Melanie Scott stated that she would look into this for next year's festival.

Cllr Moloney thanked Melanie Scott for her update and praised the work the Arts Service does.

#### **Item 7: Update on the Library Service by Pat Bracken**

Pat Bracken, Senior Executive Librarian gave an update on the Library Service. He stated the Summer Stars Reading programme was launch by Cllr Declan Burgess, Cathaoirleach, Tipperary County Council on 17<sup>th</sup> June. Students from Scoil Ailbhe, Thurles attended the launch where they were entertained by Magician 'Spageddy Eddy'

Pat Bracken also spoke about the Bealtaine Festival. He stated that the Library Service hosted a series of concerts by Jim of the Mills who was accompanied by his daughter, Cáit Ní Riain. These concerts took place in Clonmel, Thurles, Tipperary Town, Nenagh and were very successful.

Pat Bracken stated that staff from Tipperary Town Library were invited to participate in the Literacy Changing Lives event held at Croke Park on 16<sup>th</sup> June. Tipperary Town Library has received funding through the collaboration and innovation fund supported by Adult Literacy for Life. This funding has enabled Tipperary Town Library in partnership with the HSE to deliver Irish sign language (ISL) classes in our community.

Pat Bracken referred to the Regional Adult Literacy Coalition which was setup by Tipperary ETB to implement the Adult Literacy for Life strategy. It has representatives from lots of organisations including the Library Service that want to work together to improve services and supports for adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs. Pat Bracken stated that the Library Service worked closely with the ETB and in particular, Ester Mackey on literacy initiatives.

Cllr Siobhan Ambrose thanked Pat Bracken for the update. She asked about the latest progress regarding the new Clonmel Library. Damien Dullaghan stated that the planning application was being prepared by the design team and he anticipated that a planning application would be lodged later in the year.

**Item 8: Update on the Biodiversity Service by Ann Marie Fleming**

Ann-Marie Fleming, Biodiversity Officer gave an presentation on the Biodiversity Service. She stated that the primary aim in 2025 was the completion and adoption of the Tipperary Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030. She outlined the timeline on how this would be achieved and stated that she would update members at the July workshop on the Biodiversity Action Plan.

**Item 9: Update on the Museum Service by Marie McMahon**

Marie McMahon, Museum Curator gave an update on the Museum Service. She stated that the Museum is currently planning a new 1980s and Vincent Hanley Exhibition, a visual feast of nostalgia. She stated that Vincent Hanley was a native Clonmel and 2FM presenter in his short life. Vincent passed away in 1987 aged 32. The Museum has received donations of materials relating to MTUSA from Conor McAnally former producer of MTUSA and friend of the late Vincent Hanley. She stated that Museum staff had constructed an eighties styled bedroom, arcade machine and an AV presentation. This exhibition will be launched in July.

Marie McMahon also gave an update on the Heritage Stewardship project. Scheme. She stated that the museum partnered with schools, community groups, skilled craftspeople and other local authority bodies, placing skills-sharing and sustainability at its heart.

The project began in April and will run through to October 2025. The programme offers a unique mix of hands-on learning, intergenerational exchange, and creative expression. Key elements include stone carving workshops with sculptor Philip Quinn, willow planting and weaving with artist Lynn Kirkham, textile workshops led by Leisa Grey and Will O' Connell master Carpenter. These practical sessions will be complemented by monthly lectures and skills demonstrations from leading figures in folklore, heritage, and vernacular design, including oral historian Michael Fortune.

A core aim of the project is to reconnect people with the craft heritage of their own localities, from the materials used in creating those crafts to the oral traditions that accompany them. It places special focus on sustainable practices and the use of local resources, including a community willow planting in Clonmel that will provide materials for future workshops.

In addition to student-led creations, adult learning groups in Nenagh will explore traditional dyeing, weaving, and stitching techniques, contextualised by artefacts from the Museum's own collection. The work produced across all workshops will be publicly exhibited at the Museum in the autumn, offering another opportunity to reflect on the process, skills acquired, and stories shared.

**Item 10: Formation of Irish Language Committee (Referred to SPC by Plenary Council Meeting)**

It had been agreed at the previous SPC meeting that Damien Dullaghan would meet with Irish Language Officer, Tipperary County Council and the matter would then be discussed further at the June SPC. Damien Dullaghan advised members that the Irish Language Officer was currently on sick leave. It was then agreed that this issue would be dealt with at the September SPC meeting.

**AOB**

None

**Dates of future meetings**

The next meeting will be held on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2025.

This concluded the business of the Meeting.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Councillor Andy Moloney, Chairperson.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2025