

Minutes of Meeting of Library Services, Culture and Biodiversity Strategic Policy Committee held on 26th November, 2024 in Thurles MD Offices and via Zoom

Present:

Councillors: Cllr Andy Moloney (Chairperson), Cllr Siobhan Ambrose, Cllr John Crosse, Cllr Niall Dennehy, Cllr Pamela Quirke O'Meara

Sectoral Interest: Theresia Gushychlbauer, Sean O'Farrell, Aislinn O'Keeffe, Martin Quinn

In Attendance: Brian Beck, Director of Services
Damien Dullaghan, County Librarian
Jayne Sutcliffe, Museum Service
Melanie Scott, Arts Officer
Róisín O'Grady, Heritage Officer
Ann-Marie Fleming, Biodiversity Officer
Caitriona O'Connor, Royal Sites of Ireland Officer

Apologies: Cllr Phyll Bugler, Cllr Kay Cahill Skehan, Cllr John Fitzgerald, Cllr Richie Molloy, Cllr Louise Morgan Walsh

Councillor Moloney opened the Meeting and welcomed those in attendance.

Item 1: Minutes from previous meeting, 26th January, 2024

Proposed: Cllr Niall Dennehy

Seconded: Cllr Siobhan Ambrose

Matters arising: None

Item 2: Overview of the role of the SPC

Brian Beck addressed the meeting regarding the role of SPCs within the Local Authority. He stated that the SPC allows for the greater consideration of policy which can be addressed in detail. He further stated that this was a very important role for the SPC as it allows for policy

issues to be dealt with before going before the council for adoption. He also stated that potential new initiatives could be put on the agenda for consideration. He stated that this could be a very positive role for the SPC as it could allow for new projects to be considered if they came through the SPC. He also stated that the SPC is a very good opportunity to engage directly with key staff. The SPC will receive regular briefings from the Library and Culture team on their area of work. This will allow the SPC to ask questions and to offer different views and perspectives. This will allow the Library and Culture Team to improve and progress.

Cllr Moloney, Chair of the SPC asked that members be mindful of using the meeting time as efficiently as possible. He also asked that if members have queries, that they should submit them to Damien Dullaghan, Secretary to the SPC in advance and these can then be circulated. This will allow members to consider issues in advance of the meeting which will in turn, allow the meetings to run in an efficient manner.

Item 3: Presentation on Library Service by Damien Dullaghan

Damien Dullaghan gave a presentation on the Library Service. This presentation gave an overview of the Library Service which is run across twelve Branch Libraries, a Local Studies Department based in the Source Library, Thurles and a Schools Mobile Library. Damien Dullaghan also gave an overview on the online services provided by the Library Service. These services include an e-book and e-audio book lending service, e-magazine lending service. He also gave a brief overview of the IT Services available in Branch Libraries which include PCS and Printing (including printing from phones, tablets and laptops), high speed Wi-Fi and 3D printing. Finally, Damien Dullaghan spoke about the events and outreach programme which is offered in all twelve Libraries. He stated that Libraries have become Community Hubs and that this forms part of the national policy on Libraries.

Cllr Moloney thanked Damien Dullaghan for his presentation and stated that the Library Service has excelled in recent years.

Cllr John Crosse thanked Damien Dullaghan for his presentation. He stated that Tipperary Town Library at the Excel Centre has become very important to the town and he referenced the good work and activities that take place there. He asked if there was scope to expand the Library into the Excel Centre. Damien Dullaghan stated that the Library in Tipperary Town had become much busier since the move to the Excel Centre. He stated that when it was located in Dan Breen House, it was the 10th busiest branch Library out of twelve but since the move, it was now the fourth busiest branch Library. Damien Dullaghan further stated that if any opportunity became available to expand the Library, Tipperary County Council would give serious consideration to expanding the building footprint.

Cllr Siobhan Ambrose thanked Damien Dullaghan for his presentation. She also took the opportunity to acknowledge the service of Anne-Marie Mullins, recently retired Branch Manager, Clonmel Library. She asked that the SPC write to Anne-Marie Mullins to thank her for her service and Damien Dullaghan stated that this would be arranged.

Item 4: Presentation on the Arts Service by Melanie Scott

Melanie Scott gave a presentation on the Arts Service. She gave a brief overview on Tipperary County Council's current Arts Strategy *Tipperary: a place for the Arts* and also on Tipperary County Council Festival and Events Strategy. She stated that a key element of the Arts Service was to provide advice and support to Tipperary's creative and artistic community. She referenced the Tipperary County Council's online Artistic Directory as a resource for local artists. She outlined the grant schemes which Tipperary County Council administers including Arts Act Grant Scheme, Artists in Primary School Scheme, Culture Night Grants, Annual Contributions/Grants and the Tipperary Festivals & Events Scheme. She also gave a brief overview of Tipperary County Council Arts Programme which includes Bealtaine-Celebrating Creativity in Older Age, Arts in Education & Youth Arts Programmes, Tipperary Dance Residency, Culture Night, Social Inclusion Programme, Professional Development Training for Artists and Festival Development. Melanie Scott then gave a brief overview of the Artists in Primary Schools Scheme with 48 projects funded throughout the County from 2020-2024. Melanie Scott then spoke about Festival Development in County Tipperary. She stated that Tipperary County Council had provided funding support of almost €300,000 to 125 events across the county.

Cllr Moloney thanked Melanie Scott for her presentation. He also praised the Arts Service and stated that their contribution makes a significant impact in the County and that the quality of the programmes were of the highest quality.

Item 5: Presentation on the Museum Service by Jayne Sutcliffe

Jayne Sutcliffe, deputising for Marie McMahon, Museum Curator gave a presentation on behalf of the Museum. She gave a brief background on the history of the Museum which dates back to the 1940s. She then gave a summary of the Museum Standards Programme of Ireland and how Tipperary Museum has achieved this accreditation. She also gave a brief overview of the Museum collection which contains over 25,000 artefacts and how the Museum showcases this collection through permanent and temporary exhibitions. She also spoke about the programming and outreach activities and how the Museum now has a county-wide programming remit. The outreach activities now form an integral part of the Museum operations and are embedded into the Museum's annual service delivery plan. Finally, Jayne Sutcliffe gave an overview into the Museums conservation work and digitisation programme.

Cllr Moloney thanked Jayne Sutcliffe for her update and praised the work the Museum Service does. He stated that Tipperary County Council was lucky to have such an exceptional Museum and a visit there was a great experience. He encouraged all members of the SPC to bring their families to the Museum for a visit.

Item 6: Presentation on the Heritage Service by Róisín O’Grady

Róisín O’Grady, Heritage Officer gave a presentation on the Heritage Service. She provided a brief overview on the Heritage Plan for Tipperary County Council. She also spoke briefly on the Irish Walled Town Network, the Historic Town Initiative and the Heritage Council community Grant Scheme. She also gave an overview on Heritage Week which takes place every August. This is the biggest Heritage event in the Country and all Local Authorities run a series of events as part of it. In 2024, there were 99 events held in County Tipperary. Róisín O’Grady spoke about The Irish Community Archive Network (iCAN) which is the leading organisation championing and supporting digital community archives in Ireland. With much of Ireland’s material, intangible and cultural heritage in the care of its citizens and diaspora, iCAN is empowering local communities to document their own history, heritage and culture on digital platforms and make it accessible to people all over the world. Finally, Róisín O’Grady spoke about the Community Monument Fund, Creative Ireland and the Royal Sites of Ireland project.

Cllr Moloney thanked Róisín O’Grady for her presentation and praised the positive impact that the Heritage Office was having on the County.

Item 7: Presentation on the Biodiversity Service by Ann-Marie Fleming

Ann-Marie Fleming, Biodiversity Officer gave a presentation on the Biodiversity Service. She stated that Tipperary County Council Biodiversity Officer Programme was a collaboration between Local Authorities and the Heritage Council, supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage She further stated that the key aims of the programme were:

- Development of strategies/policies/projects relating to biodiversity
- Community engagement and raising awareness
- Formation of the County Biodiversity Forum
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)
- Providing advice on biodiversity for LA staff

Ann-Marie Fleming stated that the Biodiversity Office had supported the following project in 2024:

- Tipperary Wetlands Survey – 23 wetland sites (focus with DZ)
- National Mayfly Survey
- Alpine newt eDNA
- Baseline ecological survey of Ashton Callows

- Hedgerow Audit
- Tipperary Barn Owl Project
- Gardening for Biodiversity and Climate Action

Finally, Ann-Marie Fleming stated that her primary aim in 2025 was the completion and adoption of the Tipperary Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030.

Item 8: Presentation on the Royal Sites of Ireland Project by Caitriona O'Connor

Caitriona O'Connor gave presentation on The Royal Sites of Ireland project. She stated that the Royal Sites of Ireland are a group of six unique collectives of largely prehistoric monuments and sites associated in early medieval (AD 400-1200) and medieval (AD 1200-1600) texts as the principal ancient sites of royal inauguration in Ireland. The Rock of Cashel is one of the six Royal Sites on the island of Ireland. Spread throughout the island, four of the sites represent the ancient Kingdoms of Ireland and its current provinces of Ulster (Emain Macha), Munster (Rock of Cashel), Leinster (Dún Ailinne) and Connacht (Rathcroghan). The ensembles of monuments of the Royal Sites are universally unique through their well-preserved cultural continuity and large-scale Iron Age complexes associated with mythology and later Christian adaptation. The Royal Sites were sacred sites and places of royal inauguration. If managed well and in close collaboration with local communities, UNESCO status can bring global recognition along with various long-term socio-economic benefits. Tipperary County Council are working with the other four local authorities in the Republic of Ireland, Kildare, Meath, Roscommon, Westmeath and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council in Northern Ireland.

Caitriona O'Connor stated that Tipperary County Council were the lead partner on this project which is also supported by the National Monuments service and OPW. She further stated that the project had commenced by working with local communities to plan for potential impacts of designation. She said that it is essential that the project team develops conservation management plans and continues stakeholder engagement. It is envisaged that the first draft of nomination dossier will be completed by 2028 and the final nomination dossier will be submitted to UNESCO in 2030.

Aislinn O'Keeffe thanked Caitriona O'Connor for her presentation and praised the ambition of the project. She also thanked all presenters and said that she looked forward to working with everyone to raise the profile of the Culture team.

Item 9: Civic Memorial Policy

Damien Dullaghan stated that at the Plenary TCC Meeting on 11th December 2023, it was decided that the proposal to amend the policy would be brought back before the next Community, Culture and Library SPC for consideration. The matter was brought before the SPC meeting on 26th January, 2024. The current policy was then reviewed by the SPC and the proposed amendment was considered at length. The decision taken was that due to Local Elections will take place in June 2024, it was too late in the current term of the Council to make this policy amendment. It was agreed that the review of the Civic Memorial Policy

would be placed as an agenda item at a meeting of the new Community, Culture and Library SPC following the Local Elections.

A discussion then followed among the members regarding the proposed amendment. It was decided that the Civic Memorial Policy has only been in operation since May 2019 and that the policy has worked well to date and has simplified the process relating to memorials. It was decided that the current policy should remain in place and that the decision taken on 26th January, 2024 not to amend the policy will stand.

AOB

Standing Orders: Damien Dullaghan stated that he had circulated the new Draft Standing Orders for consideration in advance of the meeting. There was no proposal to amend these and Cllr Moloney advised Damien Dullaghan to inform the Corporate Section, Tipperary County Council that no amendment was proposed by this SPC.

Dates of future meetings

The next meeting will be scheduled in the New Year. However, it is proposed to hold four meetings in 2025 in March, June, September and December.

This concluded the business of the Meeting.

Signed: _____

Councillor Andy Moloney, Chairperson.

Date: _____, 2024