

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

**MINUTES OF IN-COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING
OF OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY, 19TH DECEMBER 2011 AT 11.00 A.M.**

PRESENT:	Cllr. D. Owens (Presiding), Cllrs. N. Bourke, M. Buckley, J. Carroll, P. Clendennen, D. Dolan, E. Dooley, S. Dooley, E. Fitzpatrick, C. Hanniffy, J. Foley, N. Hogan, T. McKeigue, T. McLoughlin, J. Leahy, S. Moylan-Ryan, P. Ormond, G. Plunkett, L. Quinn and P. Rowland.
APOLOGIES:	Cllrs. C. Butterfield
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr. P. Gallagher, County Manager, Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F., Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S., Ms. M. Cleary, Meetings Administrator, T. Mawe, Financial Management Accountant, Mr. T. Shanahan, S.E., Mr. D. Mahon, S.E.O., Ms. A. Dillon, S.E.O., , Mr. D. Hogan, S.E., Ms. M. Stuart, Co. Librarian, Ms. S. O'Reilly, Arts Officer and Ms. N. Troy, C.O.

DRAFT BUDGET 2012

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. D. Owens invited the Management Team to address the issues raised by the members at the previous In-Committee meeting, held on 12th December 2011.

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., advised that 83.78% of the library budget related to payroll costs and the balance was for general operations including insurances, energy, maintenance and postage. Savings, he advised, from the closing of libraries would be minuscule, e.g., to close Daingean, Kilcormac, Ferbane or Banagher would result in savings of €9,000, €10,500, €10,900 and €10,300 respectfully. Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., advised that the County Librarian would examine operational changes and bring a proposal to the members in 2012.

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., advised that over 1,000 individual HAGS and MAGS grants, at a cost of €11.5m, had been addressed since 2005. He informed the meeting that service delivery proposals, suggested at the previous meeting, would be examined by the S.P.C. in 2012.

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., advised that the unit cost for Housing Maintenance varied from €278 to €405 in the county. He advised that a review of works completed by the Council would be re-examined and suggested to the members that an additional €83,000 to the Draft Budget would allow the Council's stock to be maintained at a reasonable rate.

Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S., informed the meeting that the 2011 Budget provided for 5 fire stations and for efficiency measures within the service. This, he advised, was a reduction of €284,000 on the 2010 budget and €563,000 saving on the 2009 Fire Service budget. He advised that there was a requirement for the Council to provide Standard Operations Guideline training to all firefighters and that any further reductions to the Fire Services budget would have implications for the operation of the service. The Fire Service, he added, would prioritise the recoupment of costs in 2012.

Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F., drew the members' attention to the handout (circulated at the meeting) detailing the actions taken to prepare a balanced Draft Budget 2012.

The County Manager acknowledged that it was difficult to find additional savings to assist the members to reallocate €200,000 to housing maintenance and HAGS and MAGS and an

additional €150,000 to County Roads. He advised that he was required to present a balanced Draft Budget to the members and that the reductions made would impact on front-line services.

Replies to queries where service costs were increased: Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., advised that the budget for Coroners had increased to reflect the invoices being received and that the budget was not discretionary; Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F., advised that the provision for write-offs with regard to rates had increased to reflect the increasing number of businesses that were closing; Mr. D. Kirrane, D.O.S., advised that €15,000 increase in Forward Planning was to allow the Council meet its statutory obligation with regard to the Core Strategy for the 3 Planning Authorities and that an additional €50,000 was being provided to address the increased cost of planning enforcement legal fees.

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., confirmed that the budget *G0102 – Contribution to Joint Drainage Boards* consisted of a statutory demand, in the sum of €187,000, from the Barrow Drainage Board and statutory demands from 11 other Drainage Boards. The budget *G0101 – Maintenance of Land Drainage Areas* in the sum of €30,000, Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S. advised, was discretionary and was provided by the members in previous years to address local areas where drainage work was required.

Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S., informed the members that roads were predominately provided for from various Road Grants. However, *B0405 – Local Roads General Maintenance Works* was discretionary as it was the Council's contribution towards roads.

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., noted that Swimming Pool committees had availed of grants from various sources, including OLDC, for energy and water consumption upgrades. Accordingly, grants to the Swimming Pools would be cut. He stressed that the Council was obliged to charge the economic cost for water.

Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S., acknowledged that the reduction to the Arts budget was regrettable but it had been cut in an effort to balance the budget.

Cllr. D. Owens, Cathaoirleach thanked the members for their consideration of all the issues. On the proposal of Cllr. E. Dooley, seconded by Cllr. D. Owens, the members agreed to adjourn until 2pm when they would meet again In-Committee to consider further clarifications with regard to the breakdown of Fire Services non-pay budget and a further breakdown of where discretion may be available to the members.

The meeting concluded at 1pm.

The In-Committee meeting resumed at 2pm.

A report (outlining possible discretionary areas with regard to the budgets where cuts had been imposed) was circulated to the members. The members also received an analysis of the non-pay operational costs in relation to the fire Service. Mr. D. Conlon reiterated that all reductions in budgets would impact on the Council's capacity to deliver services.

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Dolan, seconded by Cllr. Owens, the members agreed to adjourn until 2.40pm when the Statutory Budget meeting would commence.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED: _____

CATHAOIRLEACH

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16th JANUARY 2011