

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

**MINUTES OF STATUTORY BUDGET MEETING
OF OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER 2018 AT 2.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:	<p>Cllr. D. Owens, Cathaoirleach (Presiding), Cllrs. N. Bourke, J. Carroll, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, D. Dolan, E. Dooley, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, D. Harvey, B. Killeavy, J. Leahy, S. Maher, T. McCormack, T. McKeigue, F. Moran, M. O'Reilly, P. Ormond and L. Quinn</p>
IN ATTENDANCE:	<p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S; Mr. S. Murray, D.O.S.; Mr. D. Conlon, H.O.F; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S.; Mr. T. Mawe, F.M.A.; Ms. M. Flynn Kenny, Meetings Administrator; Ms. M. Cleary, S.E.O. Housing, Mr. J. Cunningham, S.E.E. Housing, Senator. J. Dolan and Ms. L. Carbery. C.O.</p>
BUDGET 2019	<p>Cllr. D.Owens, Cathaoirleach welcomed the members to the 2019 Statutory Budget meeting. He invited the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance to outline the main components of the Draft Budget 2019.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive advised the members that she had, as required, presented a balanced budget for their consideration and drew their attention to her report in the Draft Budget. She highlighted the provision of €550,000 for a reduction in the deficit, anticipated to be down to €2.6m in 2019. She advised that the budget provides for the delivery of core services with marginal increased spending in some services such as homeless fund, county roads, match funding, Social Inclusion Initiatives, HAP inspections, LECP plan, National Library Service Agreement, Archive Project and Birt Theatre and Arts Centre. She noted that due to no additional income from the Local Property Tax, no significant increase in development charges and commercial rates and also a reduction in rates due to successful valuation appeals, there was no scope for additional spending on services. She highlighted that the provision of €325,000 for match funding is not sufficient to optimise the funding available for projects. She drew the member's attention to the many successful projects that had been undertaken in 2018 such as the Canal Greenway, Slieve Bloom Mountain Bike Trails, Ferbane Fire Station and various Town and Village Renewal Schemes. She informed the members of the challenges in the budget due to the 50 further rates appeals that are on-going which may have to be re-visited in 2019 and the loss of discretionary funding on roads in the amount of €519,000. She outlined some of the objectives for 2019, to strengthen IDA relationship, promote Offaly as a National Events Centre, provide free Wi-Fi on the Canal Greenway. She congratulated Lough Boora on their "Best Place" award from the Royal Town Planning Institute Ireland</p>

Award and Moneygall Development Association's win in the I.P.B. Pride of Place Awards.

Mr. D. Conlon, Head of Finance, informed the meeting that due to no rates buoyancy, lack of development contributions and the revaluation risk that match funding for projects will be difficult and that Chief Executive recommends that €100,000 allocation for each Municipal District be assigned for match funding projects. This would allow a drawdown of additional funding of €400,000 to be spent on projects equally in each municipal district.

Mr. T. Mawe outlined the provisions in the budget for each of the Divisions in Table A and noted that the annual rate of valuation was the same as last year at 0.2198. He highlighted that pay costs had remained at a similar level, a once off NPPR income had provided a surplus, bad debts have been reduced and litter grants had provided extra funding.

Cllr. D. Owens, Cathaoirleach thanked the Chief Executive and Head of Finance for their report and invited the members' to raise any comments they may have.

The members sought clarification on the recommendation to use their municipal District allocation in the amount of €100,000 for match funding, the provision of new public lighting, Dog Warden costs, river drainage, rent arrears and the contracts for the soccer coach and the rugby funding.

Cllr. F. Moran proposed that €35,000 from lighting operational costs be allocated to provide new/replacement lighting. He also queried if members un-used training and conference expenses could be allocated to update the Register of Electors.

Cllr. J. Carroll welcomed the increase in funding for the Birt Arts and Theatre Centre and suggested that a PR company should be hired to promote the recent wins by Lough Boora and Moneygall. He also requested that consideration be given to provide an extra €10,000 be divided over Birt, Clara and Tullamore and Edenderry swimming pools. Cllr. D. Dolan seconded this proposal.

Cllr. E. Dooley advised that he did not support the allocation towards the C&E Sports Coach Support or the €5,000 for the rugby.

Cllr. L. Quinn noted the €30,000 allocated last year to Council owned playgrounds and queried if any progress has been made in taking over privately run playgrounds. Cllr. L. Quinn acknowledge the work of staff in relation to the Town and Village renewal applications, but expressed concern about the availability of match funding.

The members voiced their concerns with regard to the rates appeals, the loss of discretion in the RIG road grant, water connection charges and the loss of revenue in the future from

Bord na Mona. They queried if any sites could be sold to raise funding or a loan could be raised.

In responding to the members queries Mr. S. Murray clarified that while savings had been made in the operational costs for public lighting the cost of maintenance had increased. He noted that replacement of end of life lighting had become prohibitively expensive, but that new lighting could be provided for in the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. He confirmed that the Dog Warden cost are on a contract basis and with regard to drainage, this involves Barrow, Clonlisk and the Brosna Rivers. He agreed that further roads funding may be sought depending on weather conditions and that the water connection charges are economically correct.

Cllr. F. Moran advised that he would not be supporting the budget and excused himself from the meeting at 3.22pm.

Mr. D. Conlon advised the members that Finance had taken over rent arrears and are utilising different strategies on a case by case basis with some success. He confirmed that an asset review is currently being undertaken and funding options such as borrowing are being explored. He advised that the rates revaluation issue is being raised with the Department and agreed that the ARV could be reviewed in the 2020 budget.

Mr. F. Heslin confirmed to the members that the soccer funding is a three-year contract due to end in Summer 2019 and the rugby also a three year with end date of Summer 2020. He advised the members that the rugby allocation is a social inclusion initiative, which part funds a development officer to visit schools to promote rugby to children that would not otherwise be given the opportunity to partake in the sport. He confirmed that Offaly had not been allowed to recruit library staff for a long time are now at the minimum level as per the new National Agreement. He pointed out that the Open Library has been very successful with Offaly leading the way nationally.

At 3.30pm on the proposal of Cllr. L. Quinn, seconded by Cllr. D. Dolan the members agreed to suspend the standing orders to allow the budget meeting to continue.

Mr. T. Shanahan agreed with the members that the level of funding for emergency accommodation was high but that this is 90% government funded. He confirmed that the HAP costs allocated are in relation to staff costs and that the turn key housing will be available for tenant purchase. He advised members that a survey of vacant homes is being carried out and CPO may be an option. He confirmed that the playground funding can be reviewed to include privately run community playgrounds.

On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey the members agreed to suspend standing orders to allow them to discuss the draft budget proposed.

The meeting reconvened at 4.05 p.m.

On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. T. McKeigue the members agreed to the adoption of Budget 2019 subject to the following amendments:

- €10,000 in total to be provided to the three community swimming pools to assist them in running costs.
- That the agreements regarding the C&E Sports Coach Support and the rugby contract not be renewed when the terms are completed.

On the proposal of Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. T. McKeigue, the members agreed that the General Annual Rate on Valuation of 0.2198 be adopted.

On the proposal of Cllr. D. Dolan, seconded by Cllr. D. Harvey, the members resolved to adopt the Rates Rebate on Vacant Properties Scheme for 2019.

On the proposal of Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. L. Quinn the members agreed that the €100,000 Municipal District fund be reserved for match funding of projects in their own Municipal District area.

Mr. T. Mawe presented recommendations to the members for changes to the Business Incentive Scheme. He advised the members that there are loop holes in the current scheme and it is recommended to reduce the scheme to 2 years with 50% waiver in year 1 subject to a maximum monetary relief of €3,500 and 25% in year 2, subject to a maximum monetary relief of €2,500. He recommended some minimum criteria for upscaling; that payment must be by standing order and a three year period between applications, if they cease trading the full rates for that period of trading will apply and that public houses, nightclubs and off licences should be excluded from the scheme.

Cllr. D. Dolan praised the scheme, stating that it had worked well, but acknowledged that changes to the scheme are required, however he did not agree with excluding the business types as recommended. He suggested that a new grant should be developed for businesses to upgrade their shop fronts.

On the proposal Cllr. D. Dolan, seconded by Cllr. J. Leahy the member agreed to the recommendations for the Business Incentive Scheme subject to the following amendment:

- Public Houses, night clubs and off licences would not be excluded from the scheme.
- Shop front grant be investigated.

Mr. T. Mawe outlined a recommendation to reduce the waiver for the Long Term Vacancies from 100% to 90%. He informed

	<p>the members that this might provide a stimulus to put more properties on the market for development and this could provide additional rates in the long term. He pointed out that the uncollected amounts could be collected on the future disposal of the property.</p> <p>A discussion followed and the members agreed that while it might provide incentive to develop vacant properties, it could put undue pressure on people already in debt.</p> <p>A roll was called on the proposal to amend the Long Term Vacant Scheme from 100% waiver to 90% waiver.</p> <p>In Favour: Cllr. J. Clendennen, Cllr. L. Quinn, Cllr. B. Killeavy, Cllr. S. Maher, Cllr. M. O'Reilly, Cllr. D. Owns, C. N. Cribbin and Cllr. T. McKeigue.</p> <p>Against: Cllr. N. Bourke, Cllr. J. Carroll, Cllr. D. Dolan, Cllr. E. Dooley, Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick, Cllr. J. Foley, Cllr. D. Harvey, Cllr. J. Leahy, Cllr. T. McCormack and Cllr. P. Ormond.</p> <p>Absent: Cllr. F. Moran.</p> <p>Cllr. D. Owens, Cathaoirleach, declared the motion rejected and the members resolved to maintain the 100% rates waiver on vacant commercial properties.</p> <p>The Cathaoirleach joined with the members who complimented the staff involved in the delivery of services and those involved in the preparation of the Budget for 2019.</p>
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This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH **RUNAÍ**

17th December 2018