

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER 2019 AT 2.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:	Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach (Presiding), Cllrs. C. Claffey, J. Carroll, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, E. Dooley, N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, S. O'Brien, F. Moran, L. Quinn and K. Smollen.
APOLOGIES:	Cllr. D. Owens
IN ATTENDANCE:	Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive; Mr. T. Mawe, A/H.O.F.; Mr. F. Heslin, D.O.S; Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S.; Mr. E. O'Ceilleachair, A/D.O.S; Ms. M. Flynn Kenny, Meetings Administrator and Ms. L. Carbery, C.O.
DRAFT BUDGET 2020	<p>Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach, thanked the members for attending and invited Ms. A.M. Delaney, Chief Executive and Mr. T. Mawe, A/Head of Finance to introduce the Draft Budget 2020.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive drew the members' attention to the report included in the Draft Budget 2020. She informed the members that it is a statutory obligation to provide a balanced budget that must be adopted by 30th November 2019.</p> <p>She advised the members that there is provision in the budget to continue with services, while increasing expenditure marginally in some areas. She noted that there is provision to reduce the deficit by €400k which will bring it to under €2m, stating that this has been a great achievement over the last 5 years. She cautioned that it is a financially challenging environment with impending decisions on rates appeals, the closure of ESB in Shannonbridge in 2020 and increased costs associated with Derryclure Landfill. She informed the members that €150k will be provided to repay the loan for the Tullamore Community Arts Centre with tenders currently being evaluated for this project. She advised that the general annual rate of valuation has remained the same and the rates incentive scheme will continue to be available. She noted that the increase in Local Property tax will be ring-fenced for 2020 and the members will be able to review the LPT annually. She outlined the proposed increases in budgets for county roads, match funding, Tullamore swimming pool, the Tullamore Community Arts Centre, Oxmantown Theatre, Enterprise Development, Tourism, CCTV, Pride of Place, Digital and Broadband development. She outlined the proposed shop front grant scheme and highlighted the progress with community projects and the increase in grant funding. Ms. A. Delaney</p>

informed the members of increased costs for centrally procured services, postage and that the NPPR revenue is decreasing annually. She highlighted the on-going success of the STEM, robotics, ILOFAR and LCDC recently ranking 7th in the country resulting in €500k additional funding. She thanked the members for their support, the management team, Mr. Thomas Mawe and staff and acknowledged the dedication of recently retired Head of Finance, Mr. Declan Conlon.

Mr. T. Mawe, A/Head of Finance 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 informed the members that the discretionary budget is very low at 9% and that additional grants are contra items. He noted that the NPPR funding is not permanently sustainable; there is uncertainty regarding rates appeals and that there is a national windfarm appeal on-going. He advised that increasing Offaly County Council charges would not be conducive to economic development and the schemes to support rate payers such as vacant properties at 100% to remain in place. He advised that the overdraft approval from the Department is conditional on a previously approved decision by the members to reduce the deficit.

Mr. T. Mawe drew the member's attention to the capital budget 2020-2024 provided in the blue pages of the report. He outlined the availability of €6.1543m development levies to fund upcoming projects and noted that €1.824m is currently unassigned. He informed that members that report 4 detailed the projects in each division that are proposed. He advised the members that the current balance plus 5 year projected income amounts to a balance of €10.153m against the projected requirement of €20.050m leaving a shortfall of €9.897m, if all projects were to go ahead.

He informed the members that the rates collection is at 89%, which is in the top 5 in the country. A Corporate Procurement Plan will be undertaken in 2020 and motor tax is performing well. He thanked the management and staff and acknowledged the leadership and vision of Mr. Declan Conlon former Head of Finance.

The members joined with Cllr. P. Ormond in thanking the management for the detailed presentation of the budget 2020 and the capital budget 2020-2024 and raised a number of issues. They queried the cost of maintaining Derryclure landfill and requested investigation of alternative options for the site. They questioned if alternative funding for the management of the Junction and Tullamore Arts could be sought. They voiced their concerns with regard to the SEAI retrofit grants funding and if it is feasible for the re-training of Bord na Mona staff. They queried the homelessness provision, motor tax recoupment, local contractor procurement, pensions, rent collection, Irish Water, lighting and the continued funding for Clara bog trail project. They welcomed the provision of grants for the shop front, noting it is a good economic initiative and queried if further funding could be provided. They sought more funding

for public swimming pools, playgrounds, burial grounds, housing maintenance and extension of winter maintenance route for areas such as Walsh Island. They welcomed that there was no increase in the rates, the provision of funding for the CCTV and acknowledged that the draft budget is very economic and enterprise orientated. They voiced their concerns about the rates appeals, ESB closure, the windfarm appeals and queried if there was any report on the pilot peat study. A rates reduction to compensate businesses in Tullamore due to the disruption of the Tullamore enhancement scheme was suggested.

In responding to the member's queries, Mr. T. Mawe advised the members that the provision of accommodation for homeless is recoupable from the Department, but staff costs are not. He stated that pensions would more likely rise in the future and he confirmed that of 2,000 tenants 13% are in some arrears and the finance section staff are working with them. The motor tax revenue goes to the central local government fund, with Offaly County Council being a net beneficiary from this funding. He informed the members that they would try to incorporate provision for the use of local contractors in the 2020 Corporate Procurement Plan. He informed the members that the rates appeals process is slow and if appeals are upheld refunds will be back dated to when the new rate was introduced. He advised that there is no legal provision for the reduction of rates, but that finance will work with rates customers as they have always done in the past.

Mr. E. O'Ceilleachair confirmed that the water quality funding was in relation to pollution and that Irish Water continue to meet the Local Authority charges. He advised the members that the savings from LED lighting is invested into new lighting and the national target for full LED lighting is 2021. He agreed to look at options in relation to the Derryclure Landfill and advised that a report would be brought to the council in the new year with regard to the pilot peat roads study.

On the proposal of Cllr. F. Moran, seconded by Cllr. J. Carroll it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders to delay the November monthly meeting until after the Statutory Budget meeting.

Ms. A. Delaney advised the members on the SEAI grants noting that some are 100% funded, some may require match funding. She further advised that the Country Team would be visiting in the New year and confirmed that Dr. Kieran Mulvey has been appointed as the Just Transition Commissioner and that the grant for technical assistance has been received.

Mr. T. Shanahan confirmed that ORIS funding has not been announced for Clara bog trail, but this would be ring fenced when approved.

Cllr E. Dooley proposed the adoption of the draft budget with the following amendments:

- An additional €15,000 be allocated to the 3 public swimming pools, Birr €5,000, Clara €5,000 and Edenderry €5,000
- An additional €15,000 to playgrounds
- An additional €10,000 to library services.
- To fund the additional allocations reduction of bank charges in the amount of €10,000, reduction of additional miscellaneous income €9,000 and review payroll budget in the of €21,000

This proposal was seconded by Cllr E. Fitzpatrick.

Cllr. L. Quinn queried if it is possible to achieve a reduction in bank charges and Mr. T. Mawe responding that it would be challenging.

Cllr. L. Quinn proposed the adoption of the draft budget with the following amendments:

- An additional €15,000 for playgrounds
- An additional €25,000 for county roads
- An additional €40,000 for shop front grant scheme
- To fund the additional allocations, reduction of E Hive funding in the amount of €5,000, the reduction of web design in the amount of €5,000, the reduction of Arts Centre running costs in the amount of €50,000, the reduction of Junction funding in the amount of €5,000 and the reduction of 7.315% service enhancements in the amount of €15,000.

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This proposal was seconded by Cllr. J. Clendennen.

Cllr. S. O'Brien proposed the adoption of the draft budget with the following amendments

- Additional funding for housing repairs in the amount of €50,000
- To fund this, a reduction for the provision for the deficit in the amount of €50,000.

This proposal was seconded by Cllr. K. Smollen.

The proposal from Cllr E. Dooley to adopt the Budget as amended, including the proposals he had suggested, was seconded by Cllr E. Fitzpatrick, and a ballot was held. The result of the ballot was as follows, voting in favour of the proposals, Cllrs. J. Carroll, E. Dooley, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, F. Moran and P. Ormond. Voting against the proposal Cllrs. C. Claffey, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, N. Feighery, S. O'Brien, L. Quinn and K. Smollen. Cllr. D. Owens was absent.

The motion was carried.

	<p>The proposal from Cllr L. Quinn to adopt the Budget as amended, including the proposals he suggested was seconded by Cllr J. Clendennen, and a ballot was held. The result of the ballot was as follows, voting in favour of the proposal Cllrs. J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, N. Feighery and L. Quinn. Voting against the proposal Cllrs. J. Carroll, C. Claffey, E. Dooley, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, F. Moran, S. O'Brien, P. Ormond and K. Smollen. Cllr. D. Owens was absent.</p> <p>The motion was defeated.</p> <p>The proposal from Cllr S. O'Brien to adopt the Budget as amended, including the proposals he suggested was seconded by Cllr K. Smollen, and a ballot was held. The result of the ballot was as follows, voting in favour of the proposal Cllrs. C. Claffey, S. O'Brien and K. Smollen. Voting against the proposal Cllrs. J. Carroll, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, E. Dooley, N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, F. Moran, P. Ormond and L. Quinn. Apologies Cllr. D. Owens.</p> <p>The motion was defeated.</p> <p>The proposal by Cllr. L. Quinn, seconded by Cllr. J. Clendennen to reduce the current rebate rate to 75% in relation to refund of rates on vacant premises was withdrawn, subject to a more detailed alternative being provided to the members in 2020.</p> <p>The proposal by Cllr. S. O'Brien, seconded by Cllr. K. Smollen to gradually reduce the current rebate rate in relation to refund of rates on vacant premises starting with 95% in 2020 was withdrawn, subject to a more detailed alternative being provided to the members in 2020.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. J. Leahy, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin, the members resolved to retain the current 100% rebate rate in relation to refund of rates on vacant premises.</p> <p>On the proposal of Cllr. N. Feighery, seconded by Cllr. N. Cribbin, the members resolved to continue the Business Incentive Scheme.</p> <p>Cllr. P. Ormond, Cathaoirleach thanked the members and the executive for their contributions during the process of adopting the Budget 2020.</p>
ANY OTHER BUSINESS:	There was no other matter arising.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED:

_____ **CATHAOIRLEACH**

_____ **RUNAÍ**

