

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ**

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE ON  
WEDNESDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2020 AT 2.00 PM**

<b>PRESENT</b>	Cllr. J. Carroll, Cathaoirleach, Cllrs. C. Claffey (R), J. Clendennen (R), E. Dooley (R), N. Feighery (R), E. Fitzpatrick (R), J. Foley(R) , M. Hackett (R), D. Harvey (R) , J. Leahy (R), T. McCormack (R), R. McDermott (R), F. Moran (R), S. O’Brien(R), P. Ormond, D. Owens, L. Quinn and K. Smollen (R).
<b>APOLOGIES</b>	Cllr. N. Cribbin
<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>	Ms. A Delaney, Chief Executive, Mr. T. Shanahan, D.O.S. (R), Ms. A. Dillon, A/ D.O.S. (R), Ms. S. Kennedy D.O.S. (R), Mr. M. Connolly H.O.F., Mr. G. Bruton, A/Meetings Administrator; Mr. R. Bell, H.I.S. and Ms. L. Carbery (R)  <i>[(R) denotes remote access]</i>
<b>DRAFT BUDGET 2021</b>	<p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive drew the members’ attention to the report included in the Draft Budget 2021. She informed the members that this is the final stage of the budget process which began with the Local Property tax, setting the Municipal District allowance and the final budget. She welcomed the additional government funding in the amount of €3.3m which offset the loss of rates from the closure of West Offaly Power Station Shannonbridge enabling the presentation of a balanced budget to the members. She pointed out that service provision will be maintained, €50k has been provided for the deficit and €550k for bad debt provision.</p> <p>Mr. M. Connolly provided the members with details of the draft budget, noting the significant challenges, with increased service demands, budget requirements, provision of match funding, on-going rates appeals and two additional issues of loss of rates from Shannonbridge and the Covid 19 pandemic. He acknowledged the work of the finance section in paying €8.5m in grants to businesses and Local Enterprise Office for their initiatives and supports.</p> <p>He acknowledged the members’ decision to maintain the Local Property Tax for 2021, resulting in €742,886 additional revenue to be allocated as match funding to countywide capital projects of scale. This fund will be ringfenced for 2021 with oversight by the Corporate Policy Group and a report will be prepared to account for expenditure to demonstrate its effective use.</p> <p>Mr. M. Connolly informed the members that due to continuing demand for services, the need to provide the match funding for draw down of national funding streams for projects and enable the economic recovery of our county, the Revenue deficit provision for 2021 has been reduced to €50,000. He advised the members that this reduction for 2021 is required in order to maintain services at 2020 levels, and it allows for the provision of the General Municipal Allocation of €100,000 in each</p>

Municipal District. He acknowledged that very significant progress has been made in tackling the cumulative revenue deficit in Offaly in recent years.

He noted that commercial rates are a significant contributor to the total income for the Council but it is difficult to project the level of income for 2021 and therefore an increased bad debt provision must be provided to account for this possibility. Ms. A. Delaney advised that the budget will be monitored very closely to ensure the targeted out-turn at year end can be achieved. He noted that provision for €150,000 for County Road Maintenance, the General Municipal Allocation, pay restoration, funding towards Tullamore Community Arts Centre and Match Fund budget of €350,000 has been maintained. In the Budget 2021 applications under the various funding schemes for a number of tourism, economic and community projects have been submitted. He updated the members on the progress made in 2020 including the Tullamore Street Enhancement Project, the commencement of the Tullamore Community Arts Centre, the Grand Canal Greenway, the Part 8 for the Birr Distributor Road and the Edenderry Masterplan. He highlighted the €1m promotional funding for Tourism, the success of the Community Response Forum and the on-going work of the Regeneration Team. He informed the members that it is intended to maintain the existing service levels and provision for ongoing service level agreements such as Irish Water.

He informed the members of the reduction in the housing estate management funding, remote hubs funding and the proposal to pause the rates rebate scheme for 2021. He advised the members that the shop front enhancement scheme will continue but will be funded by the Town and Village Renewal funds. He thanked the Cathaoirleach, the members, the management team and the staff of Offaly County Council.

The members thanked Mr. M. Connolly, the Chief Executive and the staff and acknowledged the challenges in preparing the draft budget 2021. They welcomed the €3.3m funding provided by central government in lieu of the de-listing of Shannonbridge Powerplant from the Offaly County Council ratebook. They stressed the need to continue efforts to find a long term solution to offset the revenue loss from the closure of West Offaly Power Station. They agreed that the maintenance of the MD allowance is very welcome. They questioned the pausing of the rates rebate scheme, the level of provision for bad debt and raised concerns about the funding for housing estate management. They raised queries on Disabled Persons Grants, public lighting, vacant and derelict properties, the shop front enhancement scheme and tourism funding.

In response Mr. M. Connolly advised the members that rates rebate costs in the region of €144k per annum, there is funding of €1m available for tourism in 2021 and Fáilte Ireland could be invited to give a presentation in 2021. He agreed to pursue a multi annual approach for funding following decarbonisation, to review the management of rates on vacant properties in 2021 and to investigate alternative rates rebate schemes for 2022.

Ms. A. Dillon informed the members that due to difficulties with regard to Covid, the funding for TVR has not been fully used and this can be utilised for the Shop Front Enhancement Scheme. Mr. T. Shanahan

	advised the members that the Public Lighting regional project led by Kilkenny County Council will go to tender in early 2021, with delivery in 2022 and the savings gained will in turn fund the loan approved by members earlier this year. Ms. S. Kennedy informed the members that they are looking for additional resources for the DPGs and other community based resources will be utilised for housing estate management. Ms. A. Delaney advised the members that issues they have raised will be clarified and she invited them to submit any further comments before the Statutory meeting.
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This concluded the business of the meeting.

**MINUTES CONFIRMED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**CATHAOIRLEACH** **RUNAÍ**

**21<sup>st</sup> December 2020**