

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ**

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

**HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE ON  
WEDNESDAY 23RD NOVEMBER 2020 AT 2.00 PM**

<b>PRESENT</b>	<p>Cllr. J. Carroll, Cathaoirleach, Cllrs. C. Claffey (R), J. Clendennen (R), N. Cribbin, E. Dooley (R), N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick (R), J. Foley (R), M. Hackett, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack (R), R. McDermott (R), F. Moran, S. O'Brien (R), P. Ormond, D. Owens, L. Quinn and K. Smollen (R).</p>
<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>	<p>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. T. Mawe, F.M.A.; Mr. G. Bruton, A/Meetings Administrator; Mr. R. Bell, H.I.S. and Ms. L. Carbery (R)</p> <p><i>[(R) denotes remote access]</i></p>
<b>DRAFT BUDGET 2021</b>	<p>Cllr. J Carroll opened the meeting noting the challenges of the past year and he acknowledged the department subvention of €3.3m in lieu of the de-listing of Shannonbridge Powerplant from the Offaly County Council ratebook, thanking the Chief Executive, the Management team, and the Oireachtas members for all their efforts and assistance. He emphasised that this is an issue that will require long term solution for any future income. He complemented Mr. M. Connolly, H.O.F and welcomed the proposed amendment for tourism and the community swimming pools. As a long standing member Birr Leisure he welcomed the increase in allocation of €30k; €10k per community pool in Offaly, noting that they provide health and wellbeing in the community. He welcomed other aspects of the draft budget such as the €5k to support Irish language initiatives, the maintenance of roads budget, DPGs, match funding, Tullamore Community Arts Centre and MD budgets.</p> <p>Ms. A. Delaney, Chief Executive, outlined the context of preparing the draft budget, consisting of range of meetings beginning with the LPT, CPG and In-Committee and MD meetings. She acknowledged that it was a difficult budget and thanked the support of members and Oireachtas members. She agreed to work immediately on securing funding for future years and thanked Mr. M. Connolly, Mr. T. Mawe and the finance staff.</p> <p>Mr. M. Connolly read detailed budget into record, highlighting the overall budget of €72,617,685, with net expenditure in the amount of €26,673,741 to be funded from Local Property Tax / Equalisation fund and rates income. He reiterated the financial challenges in dealing with the Covid 19 pandemic, West Offaly Power and other up-coming challenges such as Brexit and the carbonisation agenda. He welcomed the Department funding of €3.3m to offset the closure of Shannonbridge, stressing that this is for 2021 and negotiations for long term solutions will be initiated in early 2021. He noted the councils reliance on grants subsidies and that discretionary expenditure is only 9%. He advised the members that to offset the reduction in housing estate management spend, community engagement will be required. Other efficiencies will</p>

be gained in the Offaly County Council back office function. He had advised that funding may be sought from Enterprise Ireland to assist with the remote working hubs. He informed the members that the operation of Derryclure will be re-tendered which should result in savings and moving to in-house for the Dog pound has also saved money.

Ms. S. Kennedy updated the members that housing estate management overall reduction of €90k will be spread evenly over the three MDs. She advised that an integrated programme to improve range of supports working with Community and Culture through SICAP to improve estate management and to deal with anti-social behaviour will be developed.

Cllr. P. Ormond thanked the management, Deputy Barry Cowan and Senator Pippa Hackett on behalf of Fianna Fáil for their efforts in securing specific government funding in relation to the financial impact of the closure of West Offaly Power, which has allowed continued level of services for the various programmes. He acknowledged that retaining the LPT will be very beneficial and cited the progress of Birr Destination, Tullamore Street Enhancement and Edenderry Master Plan. He welcomed the amendment to provide additional funding for tourism. He acknowledged that housing grants have been maintained and agreed the current model should be reviewed at SPC.

Cllr. L. Quinn welcomed the draft budget 2021 and proposed writing to the Ministers thanking them for their assistance including Minister Peter Burke Minister for Local Government and Planning. He was joined by other members voicing their concerns about our reliance on grants and disappointment in the cancellation of the rates rebate scheme.

The members acknowledged the challenges in drafting the budget, they raised concerns about the operation of the Disabled Persons Grants and suggested that some inspections could be completed by photo / video submission.

Cllr. S. O'Brien acknowledged the work of staff to administer the restart grant. He raised concerns about the amount proposed for the bad debts provision, the reduction of the housing estate management funding and the need to tackle the vacant/derelict properties. He queried if there would be a surplus of rates due to Government subvention.

The members queried the public lighting efficiencies, savings and timeframe for the Regional Public Lighting Project. Cllr. M. Hackett queried the provision for Climate Action.

In response to the members queries, Mr. M. Connolly advised the members of the uncertainty going into 2021 and if there is any additional income it would be used in a prudent manner in an effort to achieve a balanced outturn in 2021. He informed the members that the bad debt provision was calculated following a detailed review by rates and revenue that could result in a potential shortfall of rates income up to €1.1m in 2021, depending how quickly we recover from the pandemic. He advised that the €550k is midway figure and current estimate. He confirmed that the €3.3m includes all Bord na Mona rate losses with

the closing of Shannonbridge and vacant/derelict properties would be reviewed by SPC.

Mr. T. Shanahan informed the members that the loan to upgrade public lighting is a regional project that will go to tender early 2021 with delivery in 2021/2022. Any savings will commence in 2022 and will assist with the payment of the loan. He outlined that there are 30-40 new lights per year and 300 replacements and 2020 5 new lights were installed in Clara. Some funding has been provided through the TVR schemes.

Ms. S. Kennedy advised the members that with regard to DPGs some inspections need to be on the ground and new streamlined system will be investigated and they will work with department to seek further funding.

The proposal from Cllr. S. O'Brien, seconded by Cllr. K. Smollen, to adopt the draft budget 2021 with the following amendments:

- €50k into housing repairs, to be taken from the deficit provision
- €50k to Disabled Persons Grants and reduce the Bad Debt Provision.

Roll call:

Voting in favour of the motion;

Cllr. C. Claffey, S. O'Brien and K. Smollen

Voting against the motion

Cllr. J. Carroll, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, E. Dooley, N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, M. Hackett, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, F. Moran, P. Ormond, D. Owens, L. Quinn

The motion was defeated.

On the proposal from Cllr. P. Ormond, seconded by Cllr. D. Owens to adopt the draft budget 2021 with the following amendments:

- Additional funding for Tourism of €20,000 to funded by a saving on loan repayments of €20,000
- Additional funding of €30,000 for the three community owned swimming pools in County Offaly. Funding for this additional spend to be covered as a result of funding received for an additional staff resource in Economic Development in 2021.

Roll call:

Voting in favour of the motion;

Cllr. J. Carroll, J. Clendennen, N. Cribbin, E. Dooley, N. Feighery, E. Fitzpatrick, J. Foley, M. Hackett, D. Harvey, J. Leahy, T. McCormack, R. McDermott, F. Moran, P. Ormond, D. Owens, L. Quinn

Voting against the motion

Cllr. C. Claffey, S. O'Brien and K. Smollen

