

**MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON WEDNESDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER, 2017 AT 10.00 AM.**

PRESENT: Cllr Orla Leyden **PRESIDED**

MEMBERS: Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr L. Callaghan, Cllr I. Connaughton, Cllr D. Connolly, Cllr M. Creaton, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr R. Doherty, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr P. Kilduff, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr T. Ward.

OFFICIALS: Derek Caldbeck, A/Director of Services
Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive
Majella Hunt, Director of Services
Cait Kenny, Assistant Staff Officer
Martin Lydon, Director of Services

Apologies:

148 INTRODUCTION BY CATHAOIRLEACH

Cathaoirleach welcomed the members and executive to the Budget meeting for 2018 and invited the Chief Executive to present the Budget. She confirmed that the Corporate Policy Group, at their meeting on Monday 20th November, recommended the Budget for approval.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. Cummins

SECONDED by Cllr. Ward

It was AGREED that the meeting would conclude and the rate struck at this 1.00pm

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr. Dineen

It was AGREED that each of the Directors would present the Budget on their area of responsibility and all councillors have five minutes to speak.

149 CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

The Chief Executive, Mr. Eugene Cummins outlined the main points of the Budget as follows:

- The formulation of the Draft Budget particularly difficult with new demands for resources and new areas of financial uncertainty
- Pressures include pay restoration under FEMPI legislation and increasing cost of servicing retirement lump sums and pensions.
- Increasingly difficult to increase income streams but the significant additional rates income from Sliabh Bawn Windfarm is welcome
- Fine balance in maintaining staff levels and the ability to maintain services. In 2018 there will be additional 20 staff, some funded and some replacing vacancies due to retirements or promotion

- Roscommon loan book is manageable and not overburdened by debt due to years of good governance and that allows continued investment to make towns grow
- In Roscommon town major projects due to start in 2018 include the extension of the Arts Centre, the Innovation Centre and a targeted and detailed development of the public realm.
- Work will also begin on the Royal Hotel site in Boyle, Monksland will continue as primary industrial development
- Town and Village renewal to continue and repopulation on derelict sites
- Reduction of carbon footprint will be onerous and costly

Having taken all of the pressures and service demands into account, the Chief Executive commended the Budget for adoption.

150 REPORT OF A/HEAD OF FINANCE AND DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

Mr. Derek Caldbeck gave the members an overview of Draft Budget 2018 and a Presentation on the Revaluation of Commercial Premises:

- Expenditure is €54.5m – an increase of €2m on 2017
- Roads accounts for 32% of all expenditure
- Three year capital programme expenditure 2018-2020 is projected to be €62m
- Rates Income is projected as €12m, Local Property Tax €3.2m and the Equalisation Fund €7m
- The General Municipal Allocation remains at €2.3m
- New pressures in 2018 include pay restoration and retirements (in coming years) and Irish Water staffing

Revaluation:

- The theoretical rental value of the county is €53.4m i.e. if every property was rented. There is however an absence of data on rental value for properties in county Roscommon.
- There is a Rates Limitation Order that limits the increase in total value from 2017 irrespective of the amount of new rateable property.
- Awaiting final details of appeals but currently €2.7m of our rates are under appeal

Housing

- Over period 2017 and 2018 there will be additional rental income of €280,000
- There will be expenditure of €90,000 to do a comprehensive assessment of housing stock including heating
- Aim to turnaround voids more quickly
- Significant number of those on the housing list in private rented accommodation and unable to assess those who are in receipt of HAP and happy where they are until an offer of accommodation is made
- The council have emergency accommodation
- All Rental Supplement recipients will be moved to Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) during 2018. This will necessitate landlord inspections etc.
- There are significant numbers of houses in unfinished housing estates in areas where there is demand, therefore it is not policy to build houses in these areas. It is also cheaper to buy than build.
- We will increase stock by 190 in addition to bringing in voids of 89 by the end of 2018

- Will continue to work with housing associations and builders for turnkey projects as we progress.

151 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES - GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Majella Hunt, Director of Services outlined the main factors with regard to the Budget under her Directorate:

Water Services:

- The Budget with Irish Water is not yet finalised for 2018 as will be agreed under the Annual Service Plan and KPI's. However, it is expected that the headcount and expenditure on goods and services will be reduced by 3%.
- Significant imminent challenges will be as a result of the establishment of the Regional Capital Office in Galway City and the implication for staff working on Capital projects in Roscommon and the Irish Water Transformation Plan to reorganise the water sector.
- Private and semi private group water schemes still remain as responsibility of Roscommon County Council
- Capital projects over next three years in partnership with Irish water include major upgrade works to existing water and sewerage infrastructure including networks.

Environment:

- The setting up of LAWCO and the publication of the River Basin Management Plan will considerably increase work on priority areas in 2018 while meeting the objectives of Connacht Ulster Waste Management Plan remains a priority in 2018
- Mandatory works continue on our closed landfills and we will maintain the service in the operation of recovery and recycling facilities
- We will continue to engage with communities and schools in our litter management programme.
- Implementation of the Waste Regulations will continue and it is anticipated we will receive grant funding under the anti-dumping initiative in 2018 as we carried out successful initiatives in 2017 including the purchase of a drone will allow for increased monitoring and enforcement.

Roads and Transportation:

- The figures included in the draft budget for the Roads Grants 2018 are in line with 2017 allocations as notification not yet received from TII. The Roads Programme for 2018 will be presented to Municipal Districts for adoption in early 2018.
- Ongoing reduction in funding for local roads maintenance
- Necessary to prioritise pavement maintenance and road drainage in 2018 while other functions such as litter control, grass cutting, road sweeping will be provided within the limited resources available.
- Need to continue monitoring spend on public lighting although commenced upgrading to LED lighting
- Inclusion of €174k for Low cost remedial measures such as renewed signage, road lining and improved junction definition and bridge inspections
- Capital programme is funded by TII and includes €6.1m for N61 realignment Ratalen & Treanagry, closeout of Ballaghaderreen Bypass, planning and design of N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge and advance works on N60 Oran and N61 Coolteigue.

152 REPORT OF A/DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, PLANNING AND ENTERPRISE

Mr. Martin Lydon presented his report on Planning and Enterprise:

Planning & Enterprise

- Forward planning will commence preparation of Roscommon Development Plan 2020-2026
- Provision for Joint Retail Strategy
- Seminars throughout Q1 2018 for Rural Design guidelines to bring clarity for agents and customers
- Vacant Site Levy will come into effect from 1 June 2018
- Town Planning Unit set up with two planners and one architect in-house. Who have commenced work in Boyle
- Development Management – increase in planning applications year on year and now advocating pre-planning service.
- Encouraging signs for our industrial sites with microenterprises looking for sites
- Tourism Development – A strategy was developed in 2017 and need to tap into the potential of the River Shannon
- Expansion of Town and Village plans
- Unfinished housing estates continue to make progress
- Need to market County Roscommon
- Town teams are now incorporated companies – taking on increasing number of good initiatives that should be promoted
- Community support in recreation with funding for GAA, Soccer, Rugby and ladies football in 2018
- Development of the Arts with extension for Arts Centre.
- Involvement in Music Generation for next 3 years with a contribution of €50,000 to bring music to all schools.
- Capital Works include the Innovation Centre and a potential €4m funding from CLAR and Town and Villages will necessitate plans for ‘shovel ready’ projects. Development of the Royal Hotel site in Boyle will be a big project to commence but will not be a hotel as licence now gone and Council not in hotel business.

153 DEBATE ON DRAFT BUDGET 2018

The Members welcomed the Draft Budget as presented by the Chief Executive with the following comments and questions:

- Significant expenditure of €54million and the increase from 2016 indicates an improvement in the county.
- Comment on the refusal rate of 38% of 144 houses offered as there are 539 households on the waiting list.
- Disappointment that the N5 from Tibohine to Scramoge is not included for upgrading by TII as yet.
- Urge the executive to look at all options with regard to the development of the Royal Hotel site in Boyle
- Welcome new Development Guidelines
- Company in Elphin can supply home heating oil in small quantities which would suit low income families
- Welcome the upgrade of the North East Roscommon RWSS although some people do not realise

the water is now safe to drink.

- Thanks to litter wardens for diligent work in relation to the growing problem of fly-tipping
- Need to grow the libraries facilities
- Too slow of progress in relation to N5 upgrade at Clashaganny and Tulsk
- Need more resources to fund land drainage.
- Agree with the need for more marketing of County Roscommon from tourism perspective
- It has been a very difficult year as a ratepayer with the changes of valuations. It is also worrying that €2.8m rates amount is under appeal to valuation tribunal
- Concern no funding for upgrade of N60 national secondary road
- Welcome the housing survey that should help identify and subsequently upgrade unsuitable heating systems in our housing stock
- The Town Teams have given all towns a lift with funded projects
- Knock Airport – As the airport had a profit of €643k last year will Roscommon County Council receive a dividend?
- Why is the cost of dog control so expensive – need to always look for better value
- Importance of getting unfinished housing estates to the point at which they can be sold. How many houses may come on-stream to deal with social and affordable issues in Co. Roscommon?
- Welcome Innovation Centre but are we entering an area that is already facilitated by the private sector i.e. is there a duplication of funding?
- Welcome turnkey developments for Boyle
- Revaluation has led to uncertainty about rates
- Can the Council access SEAI funding for improvements that will be required as a result of housing condition survey?
- Welcome the proposed capital investment in Castlerea Swimming pool and the funding of sports development in the county in a number of sporting areas
- Welcome the Lough Mask Water project that is underway and solve the water problems for Ballinlough and Loughglynn
- Complement the voluntary work done by Tidy Towns committees
- Disappointed that there is not enough funding coming from central government for maintenance of local roads and hope to see increase in allocation when its announced
- We should be encouraging builders to build houses
- Need more monitoring of Bring Banks and in particular where there are Clothing Banks
- When can we expect a directive on one off housing?
- When can we expect final account on Áras an Chontae?
- Welcome the presentation on Rates and Valuations by the A/Head of Finance that gave a clear analysis of the situation.
- Need to take into account the surveys to be carried out on Sliabh Bawn
- Welcome expenditure on leisure centre to keep it up to standard.
- Need to take responsibility for closure of drains by landowners
- Look forward to success of Pilot Hedge cutting scheme in each Municipal District
- Would like to have upgrade of N63 Athleague to Four Roads included
- Need to review payment of €80 fee to undertakers in respect of transporting remains to Morgue in Roscommon Hospital for deaths in respect of accidents. Suggest it is increased to €250 – total budget is €129k for Morgue and Coroner expenses.
- The implications of Brexit on our finances in future is unknown
- Expenditure of €27k on upkeep of public conveniences is very high

- Need for a new water scheme serving the Ballaghaderreen area
- While welcome tourism development there is no mention of West Roscommon
- Despite the bringing back into habitation many existing and unfinished houses, there is a need to start building new houses.
- Do not agree that applicants should be left off the housing list unless there is an unreasonable reason for refusal of a house
- Commence the issue of enforcement notices for hedges not cut as required by regulation
- There are a number of unfinished housing estates with longstanding problems that need to be addressed.
- Our rates are higher than any adjoining local authority and this will make us less competitive. The new method of calculating rates makes it difficult potential investors to accurately calculate their potential rates bill
- Need adequate population in rural areas to make them sustainable. Unless we can have the National Planning Framework amended we will have a problem with rural depopulation. The closure of community facilities is a problem.
- Request that the new rural design guidelines should be flexible and not increase the cost of building a house
- Concern about flooding and trends and mitigation works.
- If we are drawing up joint plans with Westmeath County Council, Tier 1 Plans should be used as the Monksland area has ability to extend and expand.
- All of our housing stock should be brought up to 2018 standards.
- Where are the ten housing sites for sale advertised for the public to be aware of them?
- Concern about the restriction of cleaning up at weekends especially bank holiday weekends – consider spot checks
- Welcome tourism funding and the kiosk provided in Casey's to promote the county
- Very conscious of the income received from businesses and public of county Roscommon and we need to drawdown as much public funding as possible. It is vital that communities have plans in place to draw down such funds.
- Short timeframe for private group water schemes to draw down funding despite the multi annual programme
- How many households availed of housing grants in 2017?
- Can applications for warmer homes schemes be amalgamated?
- When will we be in a position to have Innovation Centre up and running?
- The Council should consider purchasing more land in the Monksland area to have available to attract industry as it is a prime centre for industrial development
- Any proposals to upgrade the Monksland Wastewater Treatment plant by Irish water?
- Positive that there are new businesses set up as result of Rates Incentive Scheme
- Welcome the fact that increased rates income from Sliabh Bawn windfarm will help other rate payers but the funds should be spent in area near the windfarm i.e. ring-fenced.
- Issue with litter on roads, suggest an Adopt a Road Pilot Scheme
- Are there prosecutions pending as result of drone footage captured?
- Road Safety – need review of traffic management
- Ensure Part 8 is brought to Members in Quarter 1 to develop Innovation Centre – a necessity to encourage job creation and keep our young people in the county.
- Bring back housing voids quicker and continue to buy houses
- Government needs to cap housing rents

- Delivery of town team projects such as CCTV in Roscommon town is welcome

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Naughten

SECONDED by Cllr. Leyden

It was **AGREED** to write to TII to seek the upgrade of the N61 to National Primary Road status.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Connaughton

SECONDED by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** to increase fee payable to undertakers for mortuary services to Roscommon hospital.

The Chief Executive addressed the comments in relation to the ring-fencing of funds for works at Sliabh Bawn:

The Council has already committed to the Noise Survey and any works outside of this can be looked at as the year progresses, within the flexibility of the General Municipal Allocation and outside the budget process. The budget is finely balanced, looks at all of the risks, rates appeals and requirements of all programmes. Any ring-fencing of money from the budget for Sliabh Bawn will put other areas of the budget at risk.

Mr. Derek Caldbeck answered queries as follows:

- 63% of ratepayers received a decrease in rates valuation with 33% receiving an increase. The Windfarms represent 60% of the total value of the appeals.
- The benefit to other ratepayers of the rates valuation from Sliabh Bawn is only for 2018 as there is a maximum increase allowed for the county as a whole from the 2017 valuation figure.
- The Housing Condition Survey will give an opportunity to address heating/insulation problems
- A breakdown of the division of the Municipal Allocations was preciously circulated to the members – Athlone gained €41K, Boyle lost €98k and Roscommon gained €57K from the 75/25 split that was used prior to October 2015.
- The 10 sites are advertised on the website and will be re-advertised in near future. This will also measure level of interest in affordable sites
- The procuring of coroners and undertakers is done as a result of public procurement and there will be another tender issued in not too distant future. We always pay what it will cost as this is a demand led service and there have been many conversations with interested parties. There is a panel for each MD drawn down on by the Garda and strongly advise to accept the figure in the budget.

Cllr Connaughton stated in reply that the panel for undertaking did not go through procurement and some of those on the panel do not have all the necessary facilities. The figure is insufficient, particularly at night-time to carry out the necessary service and an increase can be found in the allocated budget. It was then agreed that the Mr. Caldbeck and Cllr. Connaughton would discuss the matter separately.

Ms. Majella Hunt informed the members as follows:

- Licencing and training for use of the drone is ongoing and pilot areas are being looked at. It is expected to be very active next year.
- The Environment Section welcomes and appreciates reporting of litter, notices and fines are issued

- Have also looked at the recycling centres and their operation, cameras are used from time to time
- The public conveniences are at tourist sites and this is a valued investment
- There are 5,000 lights under public lighting and liaise with planning re estates not taken in charge
- The works at Cloonakilla is a Capital Scheme and Part 8 needed
- A feasibility study has been carried out on the N61 Clashaganny to Tulsk Road and it is hoped to get funding for the next stage of the project

Mr. Martin Lydon stated that there is no dividend payable from any profit from Ireland West Airport in Knock for a period of 10 years as per agreement. He also said that the location of the Innovation Centres locations were chosen not to conflict with other ones in existence. He expects the centres to be in operation by Q4 2018/Q1 2019, depending on Part 8 and procurement.

154 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - CATHAOIRLEACH AND LEAS CATHAOIRLEACH

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Dineen

SECONDED by Councillor Fallon

And **AGREED** that pursuant to Section 143(a) & 143(b) of the Local Government Act, 2001, "That Roscommon County Council pay an Annual Allowance of €20,000 and €4,000 in 2018 to the Cathaoirleach and Leas-Cathaoirleach of the County Council respectively to cover the reasonable expenses incurred in respect of attendance at functions".

155 SECTION 76 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Shanagher

SECONDED by Councillor Doherty

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council authorise the incurring of reasonable expenditure in connection with receptions, entertainment and the making of presentations to distinguished persons and in connection with the holding of special events relevant to its functions during 2018.

156 ADOPTION OF THE BUDGET 2018

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Murphy

SECONDED by Councillor Dineen

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council by resolution adopt for the financial year ending 31st December, 2018, the Budget as set out in Tables A, B, C, D, E & F.

157 ADOPTION OF ANNUAL RATE ON VALUATION

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Kilduff

SECONDED by Councillor Ward

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council determine in accordance with the Budget, as adopted the rates set out in Tables A and C to be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for the financial year ending 31st December, 2018, for the purposes set out in those tables, as amended.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Connolly

SECONDED by Councillor Murphy

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council set the rate of refund in relation to vacant properties at 100% as per Section 31 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and The Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014.

158 SECTION 135 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Cummins

SECONDED by Councillor Fallon

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council by resolution adopt the Three Year Capital Programme (2018-2020) as per Section 135 of the Local Government Act.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:

Petrizio Bohan

Meetings Administrator

[Handwritten Signature]

Cathaoirleach

Petrizio Bohan

Countersigned