

**MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON Wednesday, 21st November, 2018 AT 10.30 am.**

- PRESENT:** Councillor Ivan Connaughton **PRESIDED**
- MEMBERS:** Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr L. Callaghan, 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 O. Leyden, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher and Cllr T. Ward.
- OFFICIALS:** Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
Michelle Carney, Staff Officer
Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive
Majella Hunt, Director of Services
Martin Lydon, Director of Services
Shane Tieman, Chief Executive
- Apologies:** Cllr D. Connolly

134.18 INTRODUCTION BY CATHAOIRLEACH

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Ivan Connaughton welcomed the Members, Executive and staff and the press to the Draft Budget meeting for 2019. He outlined the format of the meeting whereby the Chief Executive would present the budget and the Directors of Services would speak on each of their areas of responsibility. Finally, the members would be afforded five minutes each to speak on the budget following the presentations.

135.18 CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

The Chief Executive presented his report on the Draft Budget for 2019. He stated that this was his fourth budget to present as Chief Executive and the draft budget was entirely for members to accept or amend. He hoped that the budget would satisfy Member priorities and looked forward to a great year for the county communities and towns. He added that the “Digital Transformation” project that had commenced would change the way services are done, moving towards online platforms and an expectation of more changes within the organisation. He thanked the staff of the Council and the work done by the Head of Finance and his team in formulating the budget.

136.18 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES AND HEAD OF FINANCE MR. MARTIN LYDON

Mr. Martin Lydon, Head of Finance and Director of Services addressed the Members as follows:

- The total revenue budget for housing is €6.4m with €1.987m estimated to be expended for the management and repair and maintenance of housing stock

- There were 379 applicants on the housing list at 30th Sept 2018
- €208k is budgeted in 2019 for the Council's contribution to the Housing Adaptation Grant scheme
- Over the next 3 years Roscommon's combined build, acquisition and lease delivery target is 255 units with a strong emphasis on new construction
- The Service Level Agreement with Irish Water came into effect on 1st Jan 2014 for 12-year period.
- Irish Water currently pay €6.8m in staff costs (83 staff) and €2m in CMC charges
- Water Services team achieved 100% on KPIs in Q2&Q3 2018
- Transformation to the Single Public Utility by I.W. is now a priority for them under WIOF. This will have staffing implications for RCC.
- The County Development and Local Area Plans process will commence in 2020
- The vacant site register levy has increased to 7%
- The New Regulations on Planning and Development have come into effect
- There are 164 developments in the county not taken in charge – 149 considered not
- Expenditure on Castlerea Pool will remain as 2018 with an increase of €64,000 to €200,000 for Roscommon Leisure Centre
- Rates – 63% of ratepayers received a reduction under the revaluation process. 93 have appealed and this represents 24% of income. The Council is awaiting decisions on appeals
- The NPPR generates significant income but this source of income will not continue indefinitely.

Capital Schemes 2019 - 2021

- Water Projects included but not funded through the Council
- A total of €2.8m provided for expenditure on Traveller Accommodation and €3.6m for house purchase and improvement loans, and €3.1m for housing grants.

137.18 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, MR. SHANE TIERNAN

Mr. Shane Tiernan, Director of Services gave a report on the areas of his responsibility:

- The total budget for Roads and transportation is €21m with the Non National Roads funded from the Councils own resources and discretionary grant for such works as pothole repairs, grass-cutting and improvement and cleaning of signage.
- In 2019, the Council will invest in the purchase of 3 no. High Velocity Patching Units at a cost of almost €1million. This will be 30% grant funded from the Department.
- The public lighting is provided through regional maintenance contract while upgrading to LED capital programme continues on phased basis and 10% are now completed to date
- The budget for Environmental Services excluding fire services is €2.5million including maintenance and aftercare of landfills, operation of recycling facilities, waste regulation monitoring and enforcement, Waste management planning, upkeep of burial grounds, safety of structures and places, water quality and air and noise pollution and laboratory services.
- The budget for fire and emergency services is €3.1m for 2019. A new water tender at a cost of €320k will be purchased in 2019
- The process of acquiring a new HQ for the Civil Defence will commence in 2019
- The sum of €220k will be provided for land drainage, and funding provided for flood relief at Lough Fuinshinagh
- The Local Elections will take place in 2019 and funding is provided for the process while casual trading byelaws are expected to be introduced

138.18 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, MS. MAJELLA HUNT

Ms. Majella Hunt gave an overview of the Budget in relation to her area of responsibility including:

- Sale and development of businesses on Industrial sites
- Tourism strategy with the development of the Lough Ree and Mid Shannon areas under Hidden Heartlands, Destination Athlone, Beara Breiffni Way campaigns
- Support of the PPN Network and Social Inclusion Unit
- Urban and Rural Regeneration with applications for funding of such projects as Boyle 2040, Roscommon Town Public Realm, Monksland centre, Town and Village schemes, Outdoor recreation schemes including cycleways. All require matching funding for which a loan is to be applied for
- Economic Development including small businesses under LECP
- Roscommon County Council continue to support the six Town Teams and their projects. A total of €980k was received for Town & Village projects in 2018.
- The NPF supported Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative supports regional growth objectives along the western half of the country from Donegal to Kerry. The Council have appointed an AEC Officer to help facilitate the project.
- The provision of Library Services continues to be a central recreation and amenity facility operated throughout the county.
- The council co funds the games promotion officers for various sports.
- The Arts Programme continues to develop and County Roscommon has been successful in Phase 2 of the collaborative Music Generation programme and will provide €50k per annum for 3 years.
- The extension to the Arts Centre will be completed in early 2019 and the centre continues to provide a full programme of events during the works.
- Funding has been provided for King House, the Douglas Hyde Centre and the provision of an archivist for one year in the Strokestown Park House museum
- The Council will support the Rathcroghan Field Monument Advisor Project under the Heritage Office.

139.18 DEBATE ON DRAFT BUDGET 2019

The Elected Members welcomed the Draft Budget and made the following observations and queries:

- Welcomed the substantial investment of almost €1million in the Roadmaster velocity patching units. It is a necessary investment and will pay for itself over time in addition to keeping the roads up to standard for longer.
- Welcome the upgrading and cleaning of signage throughout the county.
- Update on the refurbishment of the houses in Silverroe in Boyle
- Small water schemes are finding it difficult to access funding to upgrade their supply
- Welcome increased allocation to the tourism facilities such as King House. The Mary McAleese collection has been moved to Áras an Chontae for safe keeping – when will it be returned to King House?
- Will Town Plans be reviewed in conjunction with the County Development Plan?
- Will Casual Trading Bye Laws finally be introduced in 2019?

- The realignment of the N60 at Oran is welcomed.
- Can the executive look at introducing a Pilot Scheme to retrofit storage heaters in Council Houses?
- The prospect of Town Regeneration schemes under the new Rural and Urban Regeneration funds are timely and very positive for the county
- Concern that there are still many unfinished housing estates in the county.
- It is very welcome news that Phase 2 of the Food Hub in Castlerea will commence soon
- A €561k spend on providing motor tax services – is this not very high?
- Investment in footpaths and LED lighting is to be welcomed. The replacement of the LED lights should be done on a phased basis.
- The cost of €584k to run the recycling centres is very high and there should be opportunities to find better value in disposing of the goods.
- While there is a lot of thought and effort in putting the budget together, more resources from Central Government must be forthcoming. There has been a cut of €80m over the past 10 years to County Roscommon.
- It is important to have adequate grants for older people and people with disabilities.
- Happy to see the Rates Initiative continues to be provided for in the budget.
- Delighted to see that plans are being put in place to facilitate economic development for when large scale funding becomes available.
- When will the Enterprise Hub in Monksland be open?
- With regard to tourism, the upper Shannon investment plans appears to be ok but there is deficit in South Roscommon tourism investment from Athlone to Roscommon. What is the update on the Greenway from Athlone to Ballinasloe?
- Can the executive give an update on the urgent improvement works required at Bealnamullia and Clonakilla? Is the allocation for upgrade works in Bealnamullia at the R362 not too small?
- The investment in 255 new housing units over the next three years is very welcome but do people who refuse an offer of a house remain on the housing list?
- Can more matching funding be provided for housing repairs if there is an increased central government allocation?
- Local Authorities are not receiving money to build houses.
- Desire to see the focus move to villages in the county from 2019 onwards.
- Good to see that the Arigna Mining Experience has received a Science Foundation Ireland Discovery Centre recently that will showcase the past, present and future for primary schools learning.
- What is the update on the N5 Tulsk to Clashaganny road improvement works?
- Welcome the Town and Village and community funding but it is important that small communities are not bypassed when the funds are allocated.
- Is the Dog Control service contracted out?
- Welcome the increased funding allocation for the Douglas Hyde and Rathcroghan projects.
- Concern about the impact of the recent housing rent review for some Council tenants.
- There is a major issue with roads funding for the county from the local roads to the National primary roads.
- Concern by residents regarding preferred route of the Knockcroghery Bypass on the N61.
- No emergency fund to deal with roads issues.
- Satisfied with LEADER funding expenditure to date in 2018
- When there is an increase in local funding available, funding for small projects at Municipal level should be restored.
- Delighted to see Lough Fuinshinagh included for funding.

- Welcome the start of the process to secure new base for the Civil Defence
- Welcome the objective of having cycle-ways countywide.
- Congratulate Rathcroghan on securing a Pride of Place award.
- Where are the dangerous buildings in the county?
- Welcome for the Local Improvements Scheme as everyone expects to have their roads looked after.
- While welcoming some investment in our tourism attractions, we require substantial investment in Heritage Tourism in Roscommon.
- Welcome funding of four games promotion officers in the county.
- This budget will attract significant funding to support revitalising the county
- Welcome funding to help projects such as Light up Roscommon Castle, CCTV, and in the future the Public Realm in Roscommon town
- There is a need to continue to develop Roscommon tourism as part of the Hidden Heartlands and look at 10km radius of Bears Breiffni way.
- Can Roscommon develop larger projects from Creative Ireland funding? Perhaps we could get more National Exhibitions into the county.
- Request that extra funding set aside for the twinning visit of Chartrettes next year
- Can there be an assessment carried out on the sporting needs/facilities in the county?
- The realignment of the N5 at Scramogue cross must be a priority.
- It is not satisfactory that central funding for roads is not known before this budget is presented for adoption.
- Are there any proposals for charging units for electric/hybrid cars around the county?
- There needs to be a commitment to fund the Heritage Plan – the libraries are a very important part of this.
- With the future investment in Digital Transformation, it is important to remember to cater for those who do not have online access or the ability to use online services
- The recently approved resolution to seek a €10m loan gives a very positive message that the County Council is serious about economic development.
- The new Council in 2019 will have to consider LPT and Rates and the income it generates into the future.
- The success of the Town Teams could be translated to Village Teams in the future
- There may be an opportunity to leverage funding from Creative Ireland fund

The Executive replied to queries as follows:

- The Contract for purchase of houses at Silverroe is not yet signed but a contract to use bond money for necessary works has been signed.
- Town plans will be looked at as part of the County Development plan
- The retrofitting of storage hearers is an issue and will be a pilot scheme
- The cost of providing the Motor Tax service is not funded which is why we encourage more people to use online facility.
- Unfinished housing Estates with sewerage issues is not necessarily an Irish water issue, there are many complexities involved including the private sector and those holding bonds.
- Tenants are obliged to inform the Council of a change in income circumstances. The recent rent review was necessary with 88% of the assessed rents charged less than €400pm and almost half received a rent increase on less than 10%.

- Welcome positive comments regarding the high velocity patching units.
- There is a phased approach to replacing the Public Lighting to LED at an overall cost of €3m. The sector is looking at the European Investment Bank for loan.
- Roads – The Tulsk/Clashganny section of the N5 is at initial Planning Stage. The Council will support works at the Ardcarne turnoff on the N4 but this is a TII project. The route selection for the Knockcroghery bypass is not yet confirmed and road safety works for Rahara are included in the Budget.
- The Dog Warden service is contracted.
- An announcement is expected on Friday regarding the Rural Regeneration funding.
- There is an expectation of a decision on funding for the Roscommon Innovation centre by the year end.
- There are two programmes as part of the River Shannon Master Plan. Consultants have been appointed and service gaps appointed and all communities will be contacted and involved in the study.
- There are opportunities under the Leader programme for funding of small projects for communities.
- The Mary McAleese Collection is owned by the OPW and the Council are responsible for its security. It is currently in Áras an Chontae for safekeeping and will be returned to King House in the Spring.
- The Athlone Ballinasloe Greenway is part of the Dublin Galway route and a Part 8 will have to be prepared to approval regarding the crossing of the River Shannon
- It was agreed at the CPG this morning to issue an invitation to the Chartrette twinning group. A programme will be developed in the New Year but the budget is limited.

In the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Fallon

SECONDED by Cllr. Kilduff

It was **AGREED** that if more funds become available, the Municipal District funding could be reintroduced to provide matching funding for smaller community projects.

140.18 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - CATHAOIRLEACH AND LEAS CATHAOIRLEACH

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr Kilduff

It was **AGREED** 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 2019 to the Cathaoirleach and Leas-Cathaoirleach of the County Council respectively to cover the reasonable expenses incurred in respect of attendance at functions.

141.18 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - CATHAOIRLEACH OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Doherty

SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

It was **AGREED** pursuant to the Local Government Act, 2001, and the Local Government Reform Act 2014 that Roscommon County Council pay an Annual Allowance of €6,000 in 2019 to the Cathaoirleach of the Athlone, Boyle and Roscommon Municipal Districts respectively to cover the reasonable expenses incurred in respect of attendance at functions.

142.18 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEMBERS

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Murphy

SECONDED by Cllr. Byrne

It was **AGREED** pursuant to Local Government Reform Act 2014 that Roscommon County Council pay an Annual Allowance of €1,000 in 2019 to each Elected Member to reflect the additional work carried out and expenses incurred in the new Municipal District structure.

143.18 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Fallon

SECONDED by Cllr. Mulligan

It was **AGREED** pursuant to Local Government Reform Act 2014 that Roscommon County Council pay an annual allowance of €6,000 in 2019 to each Chairperson of the designated Strategic Policy Committees

144.18 SECTION 76 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 - ENTERTAINMENT EXPENDITURE

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Creaton

SECONDED by Cllr. Leyden

It was **AGREED** 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 2019.

145.18 ADOPTION OF BUDGET 2019

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cummins

SECONDED by Cllr. Dineen

It was **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council by resolution adopt for the financial year ending 31st December, 2019, the Budget as set out in Tables A, B, C, D, E & F.

146.18 ADOPTION OF ANNUAL RATE OF VALUATION

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Ward

SECONDED by Cllr. Naughten

It was **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, 2019, for the purposes set out in those tables, as amended.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Dineen

SECONDED by Cllr. Doherty

It was **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.

147.18 SECTION 135 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr.Cummins
SECONDED by Cllr.Naughten

It was **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 Bohon

Meetings Administrator

Ivan Cummins
Cathaoirleach

Petrizio Bohon

Countersigned