

**MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON Monday, 18th November, 2019 AT 10.00 am.**

PRESENT: Councillor Paschal Fitzmaurice, Cathaoirleach **PRESIDED**

MEMBERS: Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr L. Callaghan, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr I. Connaughton, Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr N. Dineen, Cllr L. Fallon, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr D. Kilduff, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Murphy, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher, Cllr A. Waldron and Cllr T. Ward.

OFFICIALS: Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive
Liam Bergin, Director of Services
Majella Hunt, Director of Services
Martin Lydon, Director of Services
Shane Tiernan, Director of Services
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
Sean Mullarkey, Officer Financial Management Accountant

Apologies:

159.19 INTRODUCTION BY CATHAOIRLEACH

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Paschal Fitzmaurice welcomed the Members, Executive and staff and press to the Draft Budget meeting for 2020. He invited the Chief Executive to address the members and each of the Directors to present the draft budget in their areas of responsibility.

160.19 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Chief Executive presented his report on the Draft Budget for 2020. He commended the Members for supporting the increase of 15% in the LPT, as a result it was possible for the Executive to deliver a very balanced and transparent budget. The budget represents projects that were discussed in 2019 in further developing communities in County Roscommon.

In the coming year the Chief Executive looks forward to the commencement of the programme of acquiring derelict sites as in the model of Boyle, this is vital to start a process of change with significant development and matching other resources with other partners with a view to developing our towns. He referenced important projects such as the N5 upgrade and digital transformation that are progressing.

He added that recent debates in the Chamber were welcomed regarding “Climate Change” and is looking forward to working with the Members in making sure the Strategy is fully implemented and our obligations and commitments are achieved with regard to climate change.

Finally, he added that this was a well balanced budget with no surplus and would like to thanks the

Cathaoirleach and member of the Corporate Policy Group for their assistance. A special thanks to Martin Lydon, Head of Finance and his team in helping to prepare this Draft Budget as presented.

161.19 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES AND HEAD OF FINANCE, MR. MARTIN LYDON

- The maintenance and improvement of local authority housing units has an expenditure budget of €2.1m including support maintenance costs
- Maximum rent cap was removed in 2019, this additional income is included in the budget and collection rate of 92% has been maintained;
- 103 offers were made to applicants, 64 new tenancies but refusal rate is still high at 29%;
- Under the administration of Rebuilding Ireland housing loans thirty applications were received and five sales completed. It is important to note that under this Scheme the Council is not allowed to carry arrears of more than 5% as Central Government will remove the Scheme from a local authority if arrears increase;
- The expenditure figure for homelessness has increased to administer the proposals of a new Western Regional Homelessness Action Plan which will be brought to the attention of the Strategic Policy Committee's in December;
- The Council will continue to support a contribution to the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme.
- The Service Level Agreement with Irish Water remains in place. It must be noted that as part of Irish Water Business Plan and transforming water services in Ireland to 2021 there is an aim to move to a single public utility to the 1st Jan 2022. As a result, the Service Level Agreement will come to an end which will bring risks in relation to staffing and budget figures.
- Budget is maintained for the Castlerea Swimming Pool with expenditure of €200,000 for Roscommon Leisure Centre;
- Recent analysis under the revaluation process resulted in 63% of all rate account holders received a reduction, 33% received an increase and 4% remained at the same rate;
- There is a continuing risk regarding the revaluation of the rates as the value of cases remaining to be appealed equate to 18% of the rates book. If these cases receive a reduction will it will impact greatly on the budget.

Capital Budget:

- Approximately €18.4m provided for the construction of new houses under the Rebuilding Ireland Programme;
- A total of €150k over three years will be required for energy improvement works on housing stock including deep retrofit of upgrading to air to air heating systems.
- In the capital budget there is provision for the PPP Contract at The Walk In Roscommon, the contract is commencing next week
- The final Draft Budget includes an increase of 7.5% on the 2018 budget which equates to €4.3m.

162.19 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, MR. SHANE TIERNAN

- The total budget for Roads and Transportation for 2020 is €24.3m an increase of 12% in 2019 on the basis that the Council are awaiting final allocations from the Department;
- A sum of €20,000 has been provided in the budget to progress Traffic Management Plan;
- Provision has been made for the Councils three new state of the art Velocity Patchers;
- New funding from the Councils own resources of €150,000 will be provided for street cleaning in Municipal Districts;

- In 2020, a provision of €227,000 is provided for the costs associated with the maintenance and upkeep of burial grounds in the County;
- Under the Bridge Rehabilitation Scheme the Roads Department submitted eleven applications and is currently awaiting confirmation from the Department;
- In 2020, the provision of €120,000 will be spent in Roscommon for Broadband to install WiFi in towns and villages in central locations across the County.
- In the Capital Programme, Mr. Tiernan outlined the large capital roads projects that will progress to 2022 including N4, Carrick to Dromod, N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge, the N61, N60 and R362 road improvements and Bridge Rehabilitation Works at Rooskey, Castlestrange and Hartley.

163.19 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, MS. MAJELLA HUNT

- During 2020 Roscommon County Tourism will continue to implement actions of the Roscommon Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme 2017-2022;
- A provision of €50,000 for Festival and Events Scheme and a call for submissions will issue in early 2020;
- Continued development under Lough Ree, Mid Shannon and Lough Key to market as a unique tourism offering;
- Work will continue with Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) and the Discovery centre
- Irelands Hidden Heartlands continues to grow in strength in Roscommon with a recent significant investment announcement for Strokestown House;
- Funding of €400,000 has been provided as matched fund projects under the various departmental grant schemes under the Urban and Urban Town Regeneration Schemes;
- The Council continues to support the network of six town teams and is working closely with the teams to develop sustainable local development plans for the towns;
- The Council is a member of the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) with a number of other local authorities in order to develop infrastructure and attracting Irish and multinational investment in local communities;
- The budgeted provision for the operation of the Library and Archival Service for 2020 is €1,425k;
- The Arts Programme continues to develop in 2020, and intends to grow the level of engagement and participation in the arts locally for the people of Roscommon;
- Roscommon Arts Centre continues to present a year-round multi-disciplinary programme of events in the theatre, gallery and workshops spaces;
- In 2020, the Council will continue to promote King House as a vibrant historic, cultural and tourism centre;
- Provision of €50,000 as been made available to facilitate future development works on industrial sites;
- Under the Rural Regeneration Scheme the sum of €3.9m was recently announced for the development of an innovation Centre in Monksland and support phase two of An Chistin in Castlerea;

164.19 REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, MR. LIAM BERGIN

- In the budget for 2020, €711,000 has been provided for public lighting to cover energy and maintenance costs; Almost one quarter of the Public lights have been replaced to date in the

county.

- Our Assets and Energy Management Unit will develop our Partnership Agreement with SEAI the Council continues to achieve targets set out under the National Climate Change Strategy;
- The Council will see to deliver our first electrical vehicle in 2020 as we begin the process of transitioning our fleet.
- The Council continue to operate four recycling centres and thirty nine bring banks in the County. The direct cost of operating these facilities in 2020 is estimated at €431,000;
- There are currently 149 outstanding housing developments within the County to be taken in charge and work is ongoing;
- The formal review of the County Development Plan will commence within thirteen weeks of the adoption of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
- The first payment of the vacant site levy is due in January 2020.

165.19 DEBATE ON DRAFT BUDGET 2020

The Elected Members welcomed the Draft Budget for 2020 and made the following observations and queries:

- Welcomed the significant importance of a no rate increase for the rate payers of the County who continue to support the Council
- Welcome the €3.9m investment for the development of an Innovation Centre in Monksland and support of phase two of An Chistin in Castlerea with positive benefits for the County going forward, investment for Castlerea Swimming Pool, funding for the energy improvement works under the Housing Programme; special fund from IPB dividend very welcome for footpath repairs; funding for drainage and pot hole repairs;
- Progress on the N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge major roads project is very positive which will benefit the County for investment and development going forward;
- Concerns of the level of traffic on the N61 coming from Athlone that it warrants a high grade single road;
- Significant lack of housing in Monksland area, particularly regarding new developments;
- There are significant issues at R362 regarding safety and the investment in upgrading of road infrastructure at this location needs to be progressed as a matter of urgency;
- The Shannon Master plan a very positive initiative
- Welcome the upgrade of the Street Lighting but is it possible to change the colour of the LED lighting at some locations?
- Reference to the investment for the extension to Kilbegly graveyard is welcoming;
- Can the Executive provide an update regarding black spot on the Scramoge Cross and can sufficient signage be put in place along this route to compensate the losses of towns and villages that will be by-pass as a result of the N5 project?
- Welcome any progress on improvements for Rooskey Bridge and can an update be provided when these works will commence?
- Funding is essential for the opportunity to join Roscommon with the green way from Dublin to incorporate a cycle/walkway to enhance the county;
- Welcome the budget for street cleaning and litter control in the County;
- Concerns over refusal rate on housing offers especially with the increase in rents whereby applicants are struggling
- Can the County Development commence in Elphin as there are no facilities regarding broadband and this is impacting on the community;

- Welcome the funding from Ballymurry to Knockcroghery bypass but can the preferred routes be identified as quickly as possible as planning applications are frozen pending this project;
- Welcome the quality and speed of the work completed by the new velocity patchers, a great investment for the County;
- Welcome the Urban Area Plan for Athlone as this will determine the future for this area;
- Welcome the direction the Council is taking for electric vehicles and generation of our own power;
- Concerns about the impact of Irish Water will create regarding staffing issues and needs to be monitored;
- It is important to mention going forward how are we proposing to fund the ever increasing number of retirements, this will be a growing drain on the day to day budget going forward;
- Welcome the recent announcement for Strokestown House;
- Important that we identify all the small towns and villages and make sure that every village is included and we don't want to see any village left behind.
- Can the Executive provide information on the substantial allocation received from IPB?
- Landowners that are involved in the N5 project have received no payment, can this be addressed as quickly as possible?
- Welcome N61 Tulsk to Clashaganny road project;
- Welcome funding for older people so that upgrading of houses can be completed;
- Concerns of the variation within the three Municipal Districts for the Roads budget?
- Welcome the proposal for derelict properties across Roscommon in order to enhance towns;
- Can the Executive provide more details regarding applications under the Tenant Scheme for housing ?
- Is the Executive worried that due to the increase number of houses secured under RAS being sold by landlords, that this will reduce accommodation numbers or will we be under pressure to purchase these properties?
- Is the NPPR charge accurate for 2020?

The Executive replied to the queries raised.

166.19 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - CATHAOIRLEACH AND LEAS CATHAOIRLEACH

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Leyden

SECONDED by Cllr. McDermott

And **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 2020 to the Cathaoirleach and Leas-Cathaoirleach of the County Council respectively to cover the reasonable expenses incurred in respect of attendance at functions.

167.19 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - CATHAOIRLEACH OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Cummins

SECONDED by Cllr. Keogh

And **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 2020 to the Cathaoirleach of the Athlone, Boyle and Roscommon Municipal Districts respectively to cover the reasonable expenses incurred in respect of attendance at functions.

168.19 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - MUNICIPAL DISTRICT MEMBERS

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Naughten

SECONDED by Cllr. Crosby

And **AGREED** pursuant to the Local Government Reform Act 2014 that Roscommon County Council pay an Annual Allowance of €1,000 in 2020 to each Elected Member to reflect the additional work carried out and expenses incurred in the new Municipal District structure.

169.19 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Keogh

SECONDED by Cllr. Murphy

And **AGREED** pursuant to Local Government Reform Act, 2014, that Roscommon County Council pay an Annual Allowance of €6,000 in 2020 to each Chairperson of the four designated Strategic Policy Committees.

170.19 SECTION 76 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 - ENTERTAINMENT EXPENDITURE

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Dineen

SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

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 2020.

171.19 ADOPTION OF BUDGET 2020

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Leyden

SECONDED by Cllr. Crosby

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council by resolution adopt for the financial year ending 31st December, 2020, the Budget as set out in Tables, A, B, C, D, E & F.

172.19 ADOPTION OF ANNUAL RATE OF VALUATION

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Leyden

SECONDED by Cllr. Callaghan

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, 2020, for the purposes set out in those tables, as amended.

173.19 SECTION 135 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Leyden

SECONDED by Cllr. Keogh

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.

174.19 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020-2022

The Capital Programme 2020 – 2022 was considered and noted by the members.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:

Petrizis Bohan

Meetings Administrator

Cathaoirleach

Countersigned