

**MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING OF ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, ROSCOMMON
ON Thursday, 25th November, 2021 AT 10.30 am.**

- PRESENT:** Councillor Joe Murphy, Cathaoirleach 2021/2022 **PRESIDED**
- MEMBERS:** Cllr V. Byrne, Cllr L. Callaghan, Cllr T. Crosby, Cllr J. Cummins, Cllr P. Fitzmaurice, Cllr J. Keogh, Cllr M. McDermott, Cllr O. Leyden, Cllr M. Mulligan, Cllr J. Naughten, Cllr K. Shanagher, Cllr A. Waldron, Cllr T. Ward, Cllr E. Kelly and Cllr L. Fallon.
- OFFICIALS:** Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive
Majella Hunt, Director of Services
Shane Tieman, Director of Services
Caitlín Conneely, A/Director of Services
Sean Mullarkey, Acting Head of Finance
Patricia Bohan, Meetings Administrator
Claudette Collins, Asst. Staff Officer
- Apologies:** Cllr N. Dineen and Cllr D. Kilduff

130.21 INTRODUCTION BY CATHAOIRLEACH

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the Members and Executive to the Annual Budget meeting.

He thanked the elected members for their input to this budget, and the Chief Executive, the Directors of Services and the Financial Services team for drafting this comprehensive budget.

He personally welcomed this budget and is happy to recommend that we as elected members of Roscommon County Council adopt it here today.

In 2021, it was hoped that Covid-19 would be confined to the history books but unfortunately it has continued, resulting in grave consequences for our society. We now face into 2022 with our economy not yet able to perform or return to its full capacity or capability.

He believes this is a prudent but progressive budget forging ahead with a 3 year capital programme to the value of €255 million

In relation to housing, there is a budget of €20.5 million which will be dedicated to social housing throughout the county.

- €5.5 million will be allocated to the “Rebuilding Ireland home loans”
- There will be Housing Adaptation Grants available to the value of 3.75million
- And 3.24 million will be available for Energy Efficiency retrofitting

Our Roads projects have been allocated €178 million of which €165 million will be provided towards the N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramogue Project. A multi annual rural water programme of €3.8 million is welcomed.

On the capital development programme, there is €9 million for an innovation centre including construction of the Monksland hub in 2022

Other notable expenditure includes:

- €2.1 million set aside for the civic defence building

- €2.1 million for 3500 LED public lights
- Public realm projects will be funded via town and village renewal schemes, urban and rural regeneration and outdoor recreation –there is €20million proposed for this

The budget for 2022 has been increased by 5.7% which equates to €3.6 million additional funding totalling €66.6 million

I am happy to announce there will be no rates increase in Co Roscommon this year

Also, by maintaining the LPT at the 15% variation, we can now distribute those funds as follows:

- €219,000 – general municipal allocation
- €150,000 – street cleaning
- €120,000 – local roads
- €50,000 local parks
- €60,000 town teams

We continue our commitment to the environment with an additional €60,000 bringing the total to €90,000 in 2022 for energy masterplans and a further €30,000 towards climate action changes. €200,000 match funding will be provided for external projects and €3.5 million envisaged for loan drawdown in 2022

The Corporate Policy Group has recommended this Budget for adoption

131.21 CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

The Chief Executive outlined the background to the preparation of next year's Budget and the main highlights:

- Unfortunately, we will continue to live with the negative impacts of Covid-19 in 2022 but will continue to support all businesses, communities and tourism sectors.
- The rates waiver scheme introduced in 2020 is being wound down and reduced to a targeted waiver in Q4 2021. The funding through this scheme and other such schemes provided much welcome support to the Council to provide services this year. Thanks to our loyal ratepayers, we need to work with them in 2022 to ensure collection rates remain high.
- Welcome the decision of the members to maintain the 15% LPT increase in 2022 which allows for €600k funding for services.
- The new Roscommon County Development Plan will come into effect in 2022 forming the basis for strategic development over the next 6 years. A key strategic aim is for a competitive, greener, low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable county.
- Our Rural Future 2021-2025 provides for a framework for the development of rural Ireland and the capital investment in our towns and villages. In 2022 Roscommon URDF Main St. and Market Square public realm works will be completed and the Wheel and Spoke Approach project will progress. The Monksland Innovation Centre and Castlerea Food Hub will move towards construction, funding will be sought for the Ballaghaderreen Public Realm Project and the Streetscape Enhancement Scheme in the five Towns and Villages will be complete. Just Transition Fund, Outdoor Recreation and Historical Towns Initiative will progress.
- One of the most significant developments in the county will be the commencement of construction of the €200m Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge Road project
- Housing For All, which has the largest housing budget in the history of the State will set us ambitious targets to provide homes for the citizens of our county – it is essential that all Part VII plans are supported and approved.
- The Council have set up a dedicated team in house to progress actions as required under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

- With accelerated use of digital technology in the provision of public services , Roscommon County Council will be progressive and committed to providing digital online services with the continued development of “My Online Services” and other initiatives to ensure we have more efficient and effective services.
- Our staff are our most valuable resource and have been adaptable and innovative in continuing to maintain services particularly in the past two years of the pandemic. The nature of our work continues to evolve and we will continue to adapt and evolve.

In conclusion the Chief Executive thanked the Elected Members for their support in the Budget process and Mr. Sean Mullarkey A/Head of Finance and his team for the work in preparing the Budget which he is happy to present to the Members today.

132.21 DIRECTOR OF SERVICES REPORT - MS. MAJELLA HUNT

Housing:

- Maintenance budget of €1,967k has been allocated for 2022 – includes pre-letting and refurbishment works.
- Monthly rent collected ranges from €450k to 480k
- There are 301 applicants excluding transfers on the housing list currently.
- The Tenant Liaison Officer provides support for tenants and carries out mandatory pre tenancy training.
- Galway City Council is lead Authority for homeless services in the West – Roscommon had 67 individuals presented as homeless in 2021.
- Other services provided include, RAS, Housing Grants and Housing Loans
- The total housing budget is €7.859m

Tourism & Heritage

- Tourism development and promotion will fully engage in 2022 and progress a number of projects including, Boyle destination tow, feasibility of Hodson Bay Lough Ree Wilderness Park and ORIS for upkeep of trails and Arigna Discovery Park - the total tourism budget is €297,000
- The heritage office will continue to implement actions from the strategic plan and the sum of €249k is provided in the budget

Arts and Libraries and Amenities

- The total cost of the library service is €2,053k and it provides a full range of services that was greatly enhanced during Covid.
- €382k is provided for community sport and recreational development
- The Arts Office and Arts Office will continue to implement actions from the current Arts Plan and the sum of €1,061k is provided

Community and Enterprise

- The C&E function supports numerous community schemes and €2.3m is provided

Town Regeneration

- The team focus is on urban and rural regeneration with URFD and RRDT schemes, Town and Village Renewal, Streetscape enhancement, Just Transition and Outdoor Recreation Schemes underway. Public Realm Schemes are match funded with projects in Roscommon, Boyle, Monksland, Castlerea and Ballaghaderreen at various stages of development.

Economic Development and Promotion

- The operation of the Local Enterprise office is funded by the Department and provides a full range of services to small businesses

- €60k is allocated to support the six town teams

Capital funding is provided for Tourism Projects (€689k), destination towns (€628k), Innovation centres & food hubs (€9m) Public Realm Works (€20m)

133.21 DIRECTOR OF SERVICES REPORT - MR. SHANE TIERNAN

Roads and Transportation:

- The Roads Budget for 2022 is the largest one ever at €27.651m – an increase of 12%. Roads Grants from TII have been included at 2021 level as notification will not be received until New Year.
- Non National Roads - €704k, National Secondary Roads €664k Regional Roads €6.3m and Local Roads €16.567m for maintenance and improvement
- Pothole repair and maintenance is priority.
- A total of €447k allocated to 17 bridge schemes
- The LIS Scheme will continue in 20221 as there are currently 25/30 projects approved.
- €378k has been provided Low Cost Remedial Measures – road safety

Planning

- The Draft County Development plan process is underway and expected to be finalised in Q2 2022

Building Control & Fire Services

- The sum of €167k is provided for operation of Building Control regulations.
- The Fire Services Budget will be €2.735m in 2022

Environmental Services:

- The sum of €22k is provided for safe disposal of illegal waste and €150k for street cleaning
- There are over 100 burial grounds in the county and €339k provided for maintenance

Amenities

- The sum of €382k has been provided for costs of maintaining outdoor amenities – the priority will be to maintain the areas of greatest usage

Land Drainage

- The sum of €372K is provided for land Drainage Costs and €150k for Lough Funshinagh works.

Capital Projects

Capital Projects include the commencement of the N5 Road Project, N4 By-Pass of Carrick on Shannon route selection, preferred route for N61, snagging on the N60 Oran project, R362 Bealnamulia Master Plan, Footpath improvements on Golf Links Road in Roscommon Town, footpath investment. Active Travel schemes and Extension to Kilbegley cemetery are also included. Greenways – the Athlone Galway preferred route will be announced next month.

134.21 A/DIRECTOR OF SERVICES REPORT - MS. CAITLÍN CONNEELY

Water Services:

- It is anticipated that the Service Level Agreement 2013-2025 with Irish Water will be finished before the end of 2022
- Roscommon Co. Co. continues to deliver the multi annual rural water programme for private water schemes with a 3 year capital investment of €2.9m.
- Irish Water fund capital investment and Roscommon Town MD scheme has commenced with

upgrade of the Ballaghaderreen plant due to commence in 2022.

Environmental Services:

- Cost of landfill services in 2022 has increased to almost €300k
- Recovery and recycling facilities will be retendered in 2022 with a total estimated cost of €804k
- Implementation of waste regulation and inspections will continue in 2022

Climate Action:

- A climate Action team has been established to deliver the required energy reductions and bridge funding of €90k provided to support Sustainable Energy Communities and the preparation of community Energy Master Plans.
- The public lighting upgrade will be carried out by Mayo Co Co for the region and €400k is provided in the capital budget.

Other

- The sum of €440.7k is provided for leisure facilities operations.
- The cost of the veterinary service including inspections, FSAI inspections, dog warden and other animal welfare is €448.3k
- The sum of €26,800 is provided for operation of casual trading bye-laws
- The cost of Members remuneration and expenses is €1.021m

135.21 MEMBERS DEBATE ON DRAFT BUDGET 2022

The Members welcomed the presentation of the Draft Budget for 2022 and discussed as follows:

- Welcome the completion of the N5 project in Mid 2024 which should have a major impact on the economy. Everything possible should be done to highlight bypassed towns.
- Welcome the works done in Rooskey and about to commence in Tarmonbarry
- Cllr. Crosby proposed that €10,000 from Municipal District Funds be allocated to voluntary community groups.
- Very significant and welcome that there is no rates increase proposed for 2022. Everything that can be done to promote economic activity is included in the budget.
- There is increased expenditure on housing grants but the building costs have increased substantially

On The **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cummins
SECONDED by Cllr. Ward

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister of Housing to increase the threshold for Housing Grants.

- Welcome funding for Active Travel and maintenance of greenways
- Request that consideration be given to increase Cemetery Grants by €20k and Tidy Towns Grants by €10k
- This is a balanced and forward looking budget and it was important that this Council maintained the 15% LPT increase to fund services.
- Welcome the completion of Public realm projects and the funding of Outdoor Recreation Schemes.
- The continued funding for the swimming pools is welcome.
- There is a major shortage of housing rental properties in the county and it is important that the

housing capital programme is ramped up as soon as possible

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Keogh

SECONDED by Cllr. Naughten

It was **AGREED** that a letter be sent to the Minister for Housing to substantially increase the income threshold for applicants for social housing.

- Need to engage with the Department of Education and the Parents Association to ensure that the works at Bealnamullia are progressed
- Compliment the Library Service on the work done during the pandemic to engage with and provide alternative services during the pandemic
- The progression of the Shannon Tourism Master Plan is key to increasing tourism and consequent job creation
- Welcome the funding for all capital projects

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Fitzmaurice

SECONDED by Cllr. Shanagher

It was **AGREED** to write to the Minister for Housing to double the Roscommon budget allocated for housing maintenance costs.

- Request that the Director of Services for Roads seek a delegation meeting with the TII to discuss the omission of the upgrade of the N60 from the capital budget.
- Why is the public lighting costs not decreasing following the installation of LED lighting?
- Why are there support costs associated with traffic management when there is no budget allocated to this measure?
- The upgrade of the Castlerea swimming pool is welcomed and the pool proved very popular during Covid. There are more upgrade works in the pipeline and the extra allocation is welcome for 2022.
- We can see the effect of the 15% LPT increase and disappointed that some councillors have not supported this.
- Welcome a proposal to increase cemetery grants from the MD allocation.
- Thanks to the Heritage Officer for funding to protect heritage sites
- Importance of keeping livestock safe and the role of the Dog Warden
- Welcome the commitment to Lough Funshinagh and funding for Castlestrange Bridge repairs that needs to be expedited
- Welcome the increase of 12% in roads funding.
- Importance of replacing storage heating in local authority house needs to be prioritised.
- Our dependence on Tourism is growing due to lack of investment in jobs in the county and we need to make the most of all opportunities.
- Active travel measures will reform Elphin
- The amount of services we provide are only apparent when we analyse the budget.
- We need to encourage everyone to be waste compliant – very disappointing that we have to continue to provide large budgets for waste clean up.
- Welcome the arts programme and hope that there will be more support of artists.
- Can we consider creating an area for artists to meet – an expansion of Culture Night at the Castle event?
- There is a lack of funding for playgrounds and many need to be upgraded

- Voluntary group funding is welcomed.
- There is a need for expanded pre tenancy training as some tenants are not adhering to responsibilities.
- Welcome the inclusion of Boganfin funding.
- Thanks to the outdoor staff who do great work with their resources
- Welcome the hub in Monksland and the investment in Bealnamullia/Cloonakilla
- The HAP applicants should be included in the housing waiting list figures
- When with the Local Improvement Scheme reopen for applications?
- What have we collected in the vacant site levy?
- More funding is required to complete the unfinished housing estates
- Complement the works achieved under the Municipal District funding allocations
- How can we deliver under the new N4/N5 roads – this is our opportunity to increase tourism to the county
- Rates receipts account for 20% of out income and it is hard to see how this can be maintained into the future.
- We must find a system to tax online shopping.
- Municipal District Funding expenditure must be decided at MD level
- Ability to pay must be take into account in the Vacant site levy
- We should consider a new footpath from the Hospice to Hannons hotel
- Welcome the developments in abolition of the fishing licence on River Suck and all other rivers
- We are transitioning in the right direction with active travel measures and outdoor recreation
- What are the consequences for the end of the Irish Water SLA?

In response to queries raised the Directors and A/Head of finance replied:

- The support cost charges is used for statistical analysis and averaged over all expenditure areas
- The vacant site levy will be difficult to collect as it is now more of a zoning tax
- The transitioning of staff to Irish Water is currently under negotiation
- The Public lighting project is a large capital project and will not commence until 2022 so we do not see a current reduction in public lighting costs.
- Many of the housing maintenance calls are the responsibility of the tenants
- With regard to the extension of the Athlone Cydeaway to Tarmonbarry area – this is currently at feasibility stage – there are two types of funding available.
- There is threshold for housing grants and we spend €352k on maintenance and vacated houses are repaired at a reasonable cost.
- The N5 will commence construction in March/April 2022

136.21 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - CATHAOIRLEACH AND LEAS CATHAOIRLEACH

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Keogh

SECONDED by Councillor Naughten

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 2022 to the Cathaoirleach and Leas-Cathaoirleach of the County Council respectively to cover the reasonable expenses incurred in respect of attendance at functions

137.21 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - CATHAOIRLEACH OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Fallon

SECONDED by Councillor Shangher

And **AGREED** that 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 2022 to the Cathaoirleach of the Athlone, Boyle and Roscommon Municipal Districts respectively to cover the reasonable expenses incurred in respect of attendance at functions.

138.21 ANNUAL ALLOWANCE - STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Cummins

SECONDED by Councillor Callaghan

And **AGREED** that pursuant to Local Government Reform Act 2014 that Roscommon County Council pay an Annual Allowance of €6,000 in 2022 to each Chairperson of the four designated Strategic Policy Committees

139.21 SECTION 76 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 - ENTERTAINMENT EXPENSES

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Naughten

SECONDED by Councillor 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 2022.

140.21 ADOPTION OF BUDGET 2022

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Murphy

SECONDED by Councillor Fallon

And **AGREED** that Roscommon County Council by resolution adopt for the financial year ending 31st December, 2022, the Budget as set out in Tables A, B, C, D, E & F.

141.21 ADOPTION OF ANNUAL RATE OF VALUATION

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Keogh

SECONDED by Councillor Cummins

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, 2022, for the purposes set out in those tables, as amended.

142.21 SECTION 135 OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Keogh

SECONDED by Councillor Naughten

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.

143.21 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022-2024

The Capital Programme 2022-2024 was considered and noted by the Members.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

The foregoing Minutes are
Confirmed and Signed:

Patrizio Bohan

Meetings Administrator

Joseph Murphy

Cathaoirleach

Patrizio Bohan

Countersigned