



Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

Kells Municipal District

Special Meeting

9 a.m., 13th November 2020, Solstice

An Cathaoirleach, **Councillor Paul McCabe**, presided.

Councillors Present: Mike Bray, Eugene Cassidy, Seán Drew, Michael Gallagher, David Gilroy, Sarah Reilly.

Officials in Attendance:

Chief Executive: Jackie Maguire

Head of Finance: Fiona Lawless

A/Director of Service: Larry Whelan

Meetings Administrator: Claire King

Councillors were reminded of fire safety issues in the venue, including the fire exits, and also of the need to comply with public health guidance.

- To consider and adopt the Draft Budgetary Plan of Kells Municipal District issued under Section 102 (4A) of the Local Government Act, 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.**

The Report on the 2021 Draft Budgetary Plan of Navan, Kells, Trim, Laytown-Bettystown, Ashbourne and Ratoath Municipal Districts had been circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting. This report provided the background to the Draft Budgetary Plan, the approach to its preparation, general statistics and the proposed General Municipal Allocation for each of the six Municipal Districts, as follows:

Description of Service	GMA - Ashbourne MD	GMA – Kells MD	GMA – Laytown-Bettystown MD	GMA – Navan MD	GMA– Trim MD	GMA – Ratoath MD	Total GMA 2021
Members Discretionary Fund	30,000	35,000	35,000	35,000	30,000	35,000	200,000
Description of Service	GMA -	GMA –	GMA –	GMA –	GMA–	GMA –	Total



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	Ashbourne MD	Kells MD	Laytown-Bettystown MD	Navan MD	Trim MD	Ratoath MD	GMA 2021
Housing Estates / Footpaths	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	300,000
Litter Control Initiatives	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	39,000
Environmental Initiatives	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	27,000
Community Grants	12,500	12,500	12,500	23,000	12,500	12,500	85,500
Community Facilities (Pride of Place)	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	30,000
Arts, Festivals, Festive Decoration & MD Renewal	10,000	10,000	10,000	20,000	10,000	10,000	70,000
Total	118,500	123,500	123,500	144,000	118,500	123,500	751,500

The challenges posed by the budget process were underlined, particularly in the current year, and these challenges were referenced in the cover letter that was circulated with the draft budgetary plan. As it stands, the budget is not yet balanced and an amount of uncertainty still surrounds the level and stability of income for 2021.

Whilst it is currently assumed that the rates income will remain the same in 2021 as for 2020, the rates waiver scheme provided by central government this year was outlined. Whilst some rates are still due, the collection of this remains a challenge as many businesses remain closed. The level of vacancies will increase, as will the bad debt provision, and this will present a cost to the council in 2021. The main budget, to be presented on 30th November, includes no reduction in funding for front facing services. A number of small additional provisions have been made for areas such as housing and transportation. The cuts to the budget have focused on corporate areas, such as corporate buildings, finance, HR, print and stationary, etc. Uncertainty remains as to whether central government funding will be made available to cover reduced income arising from goods & services and COVID related costs. If additional supports for 2021 become available, these will be fed into the overall budget.

With regard to discretionary expenditure, it is proposed that the funding for the Municipal District Allocation Scheme, which was increased in 2020, be reduced to contribute towards a balanced budget.

It was suggested that the draft budgetary plan be noted today and reconsidered at the main budget meeting on 30th November, when greater clarity might be available in terms of additional supports available in 2021.

Matters raised by councillors included:

- Commended the executive on managing to maintain front facing services and acknowledged the difficulty in achieving a balanced budget.



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- Referred to the decrease in the budget allocated for the Arts, Festivals, Festive Lighting & MD Renewal budget – it is unlikely that any festivals will take place in 2021 but these will be dealt with, if they arise.
- Queried the spend on festivals in 2020 – the budget had been used to invest in festival lighting, as agreed at the October municipal district meeting. Money from these budgets also provided support to the Community Forum.
- Queried whether such good financial management will place the council at a disadvantage when applying for central government funding – the government has offered full and significant support to all local authorities.
- Queried the increase in the budget for wages – this estimated cost reflects issues such as the unwinding of cuts associated with FEMPI and only essential vacancies will be filled. The budget book allows for Members costs.
- Acknowledged the importance of Restart Grants to businesses and acknowledged the work of the Finance Department in administering these.
- Expressed concern regarding the proposal to reduce the MD Allocation Scheme by such an extent, due to its importance to community groups who cannot fund raise and its role in ensuring that projects are implemented in the absence of alternative funding, e.g. CIS.
- Acknowledged the need for additional funding for a number of areas including Transportation, particularly estates.
- The need to positively promote the council in all its activities in the coming year.
- Queried whether the capital allocation to the municipal districts would be retained – this forms part of the capital programme and will be determined by the amount of levies received in 2021.

It was unanimously agreed that, having considered the Draft Budgetary Plan for Kells Municipal District, to note the plan with a view to reconsidering the overall budgetary position at the main council meeting on 30th November, when further information on available supports may have become available.

2 To discuss the rate of refund to owners of vacant premises.

It was unanimously agreed, on the proposal of **Councillor Eugene Cassidy** and seconded by **Councillor Mike Bray**, that given the current uncertainty around rates income, to leave the rate at 100%.



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3 Other

There was no other business.

The Cathaoirleach and councillors thanked the Chief Executive, Head of Finance and Director of Service.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Cathaoirleach