



## *Miontuairiscí/Meeting Minutes*

### **Statutory Budget Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020, 1.30pm - via Zoom**

#### **Presiding**

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Sean Drew

#### **Councillors Present (all remotely):**

Councillors Yemi Adenuga, Tom Behan, Joe Bonner, Mike Bray, Francis Deane, Aisling Dempsey, Brian Fitzgerald, Pdraig Fitzsimons, Joe Fox, Noel French, Trevor Golden, Wayne Harding, Suzanne Jamal, Nick Killian, Alan Lawes, Paul McCabe, Stephen McKee, Paddy Meade, Ronan Moore, Maria Murphy, Gerry O'Connor, Damien O'Reilly, Sarah Reilly, Tommy Reilly, Amanda Smith, Niamh Souhan, Alan Tobin, Emer Tóibín, Sharon Tolan, Gillian Toole, Conor Tormey.

#### **Apologies:**

Councillor: Eugene Cassidy, Edward Fennessy, Michael Gallagher, Deirdre Geraghty-Smith, David Gilroy, Geraldine Keogan, Elaine McGinty, Aisling O'Neill.

#### **Officials in attendance (remotely):**

**Chief Executive:** Jackie Maguire

**Directors of Service:** Des Foley, Fiona Lawless, Barry Lynch, Martin Murray, Dara McGowan

**Meetings Administrator:** Robert Collins

**Senior Executive Officers:** Larry Whelan, Ger Murphy.

**Finance Staff:** Sheila Harkin, Ailie Dempsey, Ger Soady.

The meeting commenced after a short delay. In accordance with Standing Order 9, **Councillor Tommy Reilly** was called on to chair the meeting on a proposal of **Councillor Paul McCabe**, seconded by **Councillor Tom Behan** and agreed by all the elected members present.

#### **1. To consider the draft Budget circulated herewith for the financial year ending on 31st December 2022.**

Councillor Reilly opened the meeting and called on the Chief Executive and Head of Finance to present the draft budget for 2022.

Chief Executive, Jackie Maguire, addressed the meeting and noted that the Budget for 2022 provides for expenditure of over €162 million, which is an increase of 5% on the 2021 budget.

The Chief Executive underlined the requirement to present a balanced budget, whereby expenditure matches income and noted that the context in which the budget process was taking place, with a certain level of uncertainty created by the Covid-19 pandemic. She therefore outlined some assumptions that have been taken in the preparation of Budget



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2022 and highlighted a number of areas where it was proposed to increase investment in 2022, without any increase in commercial rates, rents or charges.

Fiona Lawless, Head of Finance, made a presentation on the Draft Budget for the Financial Year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. The presentation included information on:

- Analysis of Income and the various Income Sources
- Overview of Commercial Rates, a profile of rate payers and the situation regarding outstanding appeals to the Valuation Office
- Analysis of Expenditure, in terms of pay and non-pay aspects.

The presentation also outlined the Annual Budget 2022 by Service Division, with notable increases in service areas highlighted, as follows:

- Service Division A – Housing and Building
- Service Division B – Road Transport and Safety
- Service Division C – Water Services
- Service Division D – Development Management
- Service division E – Environmental Services
- Service Division F – Recreation and Amenity
- Service Division G – Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare
- Service Division H – Miscellaneous Services
- Service Division J – Central Management Charges

The Head of Finance concluded by highlighting the service areas that would see most increases – Housing Maintenance; Roads; Community Grants; Development Management and Environment but stated that all Departments would see an increase in expenditure and that this would be achieved without any increases in rates, rents or charges.

Following the presentation, Councillor Reilly thanked the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance, he welcomed the proposed budget and hoped that it would be agreed unanimously by the elected members. An Cathaoirleach assumed the chair and thanked Councillor Reilly for opening the meeting in his absence.

An Cathaoirleach opened the floor to the Elected Members for questions and comments, with the following members making interventions: **Councillor Damien O'Reilly; Noel French; Joe Fox; Ronan Moore; Gerry O'Connor; Nick Killian; Wayne Harding; Maria Murphy; Brian Fitzgerald; Sharon Tolan; Gillian Toole; Paddy Meade; Yemi Adneuga; Alan Lawes and An Cathaoirleach.**

There was general welcome for the proposed budget, which many contributors considered to be positive and progressive, and there were expressions of appreciation for the manner in which the Budget was put together and how the Council's budget is managed generally. Members raised a number of issues as follows:

- Increase in the Budget compared with 2021;
- Large Rate Payers such as Tara Mines;



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- Increase in Library Funding and new County Archivist;
- No increase in Rates, Rents or other charges;
- Support of Central Government during the Pandemic;
- Business Support Grants – excellence implementation;
- Active Travel Team – promotion of cycling;
- Improvement in footpaths – reduced insurance costs;
- Regional Energy Bureau – support SECs;
- Increased funding on Footpaths;
- Increased funding on Road Infrastructure;
- Increases in Community Grants generally;
- Rates Collection rates;
- Possible adjustment in Winter Maintenance programme (Kilbride and Skryne);
- Support for Venue Theatre and Ledwidge Museum;
- Bin Collections on weekends;
- Recycling Day and campaigns;
- Under-funding of Meath County Council relative to other local authorities;
- Success in increasing the Rate Base;
- Increased support for Meath Local Sports Partnership;
- Beach Management and water quality testing;
- Economic Development budget line;
- Planning Enforcement – incomes
- Homeless Services – resourcing of mental health services;
- Winter Gritting – additional fleet if resources available;
- Funding of local government and under-funding in Meath.

Responses and clarifications were provided by the Head of Finance and the Chief Executive and Mr Martin Murray; Mr Des Foley and Mr Dara McGowan, Directors of Services.

In response to the points raised on the under-funding of the Council, Ms. Lawless outlined that it is a complex process which has been analysed in a report commissioned by the AILG. She did suggest that the authors of this report could make a presentation to the Council at some point in the future.

**2. That Meath County Council adopts for the financial year ending 31st December 2022 the Annual Budget set out in Tables A – F.**

Unanimously adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Damien O'Reilly** and seconded by **Councillor Noel French**.

**3. That Meath County Council determines in accordance with the Budget as adopted the rate as set out in Table A and Table 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 Table A and Table C.**



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Unanimously adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Nick Killian** and seconded by **Councillor Joe Fox**.

#### **4. Formal determination of the Rates Vacancy Refund Rate**

Unanimously adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Joe Fox** and seconded by **Councillor Maria Murphy**.

#### **5. That Meath County Council approves of the transfer to capital account of the sums provided for various capital purposes in the Annual Budget for 2022 as adopted.**

Unanimously adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Sarah Reilly** and seconded by **Councillor Noel French**

#### **6. That Meath County Council approves the estimated over expenditure for financial year 31st December 2021 as set out in Table A – F and outturn details.**

Unanimously adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Brian Fitzgerald** and seconded by **Councillor Paul McCabe**.

#### **7. To adopt the Business Support Scheme, 2022 in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2001.**

Unanimously adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Joe Fox** and seconded by **Councillor Yemi Adenuga**.

The Chief Executive concluded by thanking the Elected Members for their support in preparing and adopting Budget 2022. She stressed that focus would now switch to implementing it over the next 12 months. She acknowledged the Head of Finance and her staff for their work in compiling the Draft Budget and for their work in efficiently processing the various rates waiver and business Re-start grants during 2020 and 2021. She also thanked the Management Team for its support in preparing the Budget.

An Cathaoirleach also thanked members for their support for the Budget and thanked the Head of Finance and the Finance Team for their work. He reminded members that the December monthly meeting would take place on December 6<sup>th</sup> as an online only meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting. The meeting concluded at 3.15pm.