



Miontuairiscí/Meeting Minutes

Statutory Budget Meeting

27th November 2023, 1.30pm
Buvinda House, Navan (and online via Zoom)

Presiding

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Tommy Reilly

Councillors Present:

Councillors Joseph Bonner, Mike Bray, Francis Deane, Aisling Dempsey, Sean Drew, Brian Fitzgerald, Pdraig Fitzsimons, Joe Fox, Michael Gallagher, Wayne Harding, Geraldine Keogan, Nick Killian, Alan Lawes, Paul McCabe, Elaine McGinty, Paddy Meade, Helen Meyer, Maria Murphy, Gerry O'Connor, Amanda Smith and Gillian Toole.

Councillors Present via Zoom:

Councillors Yemi Adenuga, Tom Behan, Edward Fennessy, Noel French, David Gilroy, Trevor Golden, Suzanne Jamal, Stephen McKee, Ronan Moore, Sarah Reilly, Niamh Souhan, Alan Tobin, Emer Toibin, Sharon Tolan and Conor Tormey.

Apologies:

Councillors Eugene Cassidy, Deirdre Geraghty-Smith.

Officials in attendance:

Chief Executive: Fiona Lawless

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

A/Head of Finance: Sheila Harkin

Meetings Administrator: Elaine Daly

Finance Staff: Ailie Dempsey, Karen Dalton.

The Meetings Administrator advised that it was agreed by the CPG that the Elected Members would be polled to ascertain whether or not they would be in favour of the Budget Meeting being held in Hybrid Format. She advised that 26 responses were received with 21 Members in favour of a hybrid meeting and 5 Members not in favour of a hybrid meeting. Therefore, in accordance with Standing Order No. 3.2 the Budget Meeting was being held in hybrid format.

1. To consider the draft Budget circulated herewith for the financial year ending on 31st December 2024.

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Tommy Reilly opened the meeting and called on the Chief Executive and Acting Head of Finance to present the draft budget for 2024.

Chief Executive, Fiona Lawless, addressed the meeting and noted that the Budget for 2024 provides for expenditure of over €208 million, which is an increase of 12% on the 2023



Miontuairiscí/Meeting Minutes

budget. This Budget, together with the expenditure under the Capital Works Programme, represents a significant investment in the county.

The Chief Executive underlined the requirement to present a balanced budget and noted the context in which the budget process was taking place, with a certain level of uncertainty in the current economic climate. She acknowledged the critical Central Government supports received to date. She further highlighted a number of areas where it was proposed to increase investment in 2024, without any increase in commercial rates, rents or charges.

Ms. Sheila Harkin, Acting Head of Finance, made a presentation on the Draft Budget for the Financial Year ending 31st December 2024. 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, including operational and administrative aspects.

The presentation also outlined the Annual Budget 2024 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 Acting Head of Finance concluded by highlighting the service areas that would see most increases – Housing; Transport; Development Management including Economic Development and Climate Change 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.

An Cathaoirleach opened the floor to the Elected Members for questions and comments, with the following members making interventions: **Councillors Sean Drew; Brian Fitzgerald; Gerry O'Connor; Wayne Harding; Joe Fox; Sarah Reilly; Mike Bray; Michael Gallagher; Sharon Tolan; Gillian Toole; Elaine McGinty; Yemi Adenuga; Emer Toibin; Padraig Fitzsimons; Alan Tobin; Helen Meyer; David Gilroy and Joe Bonner.**

The budget was broadly welcomed by the Elected Members. Many contributors considered the Budget to be positive and progressive, and there were expressions of appreciation for



Miontuairiscí/Meeting Minutes

the manner in which the Budget was compiled and how the Council's budget is managed generally.

Members raised a number of issues as follows:

- Economic Development;
- Additional staffing numbers;
- Slane By-Pass and Public Realm;
- Maintenance of Local Authority Housing Stock;
- Government supports;
- Housing Adaptation Grants;
- Flood Relief Measures;
- Traveller Accommodation Programme;
- Arts Programme;
- Climate Change;
- Emergency Accommodation;
- Affordable Housing.

Responses and clarifications were provided by the Chief Executive, Ms. Fiona Lawless and the Acting Head of Finance, Ms. Sheila Harkin

2. That Meath County Council adopts for the financial year ending 31st December 2024 the Annual Budget set out in Tables A – F.

It was proposed to adopt the Annual Budget on the proposal of **Councillor Sean Drew** and seconded by **Councillor Brian Fitzgerald**.

A vote on the proposal to adopt the Budget was called as follows:

	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
ADENUGA, Yemi	√			
BEHAN, Tom	√			
BONNER, Joseph	√			
BRAY, Mike	√			
CASSIDY, Eugene				√
DEANE, Francis	√			
DEMPSEY, Aisling	√			
DREW, Sean	√			
FENNESSY, Edward		√		
FITZGERALD, Brian	√			
FITZSIMONS, Pdraig	√			
FOX, Joe	√			
FRENCH, Noel				√
GALLAGHER, Michael		√		
GERAGHTY-SMITH, Deirdre				√
GILROY, David	√			



Miontuairiscí/Meeting Minutes

	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
GOLDEN, Trevor	√			
HARDING, Wayne	√			
JAMAL, Suzanne	√			
KEOGAN, Geraldine	√			
KILLIAN, Nick	√			
LAWES, Alan		√		
MC CABE, Paul	√			
MC GINTY, Elaine	√			
MC KEE, Stephen	√			
MEADE, Paddy				√
MEYER, Helen		√		
MOORE, Ronan				√
MURPHY, Maria	√			
O'CONNOR, Gerry	√			
REILLY, Sarah	√			
REILLY, Tommy	√			
SMITH, Amanda	√			
SOUHAN, Niamh	√			
TOBIN, Alan	√			
TÓIBÍN, Emer	√			
TOLAN, Sharon	√			
TOOLE, Gillian	√			
TORMEY, Conor	√			

Votes For = 30 members, Against = 4, Abstain = 0, Absent = 5. In accordance with this decision, Meath County Council Budget 2024 was adopted.

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 2024 for the purposes set out in Table A and Table C.

Unanimously adopted on the proposal of Councillor Sean Drew and seconded by Councillor Nick Killian.

4. Formal determination of the Rates Vacancy Abatement Rate for the financial year ending 31st December 2024. Meath County Council will provide for an abatement rate as follows:

100% of rates due where rates demand is less than €100,000

10% of rates due where rates demand is between €100,000 and €249,999

0% of rates due where rates demand is over €250,000



Miontuairiscí/Meeting Minutes

Unanimously adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Maria Murphy** and seconded by **Councillor Gillian Toole**.

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 2024 as adopted.

Unanimously adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Francis Deane** and seconded by **Councillor Gerry O'Connor**.

6. That Meath County Council approves the estimated over expenditure for financial year 31st December 2024 as set out in Table A – F and outturn details.

Unanimously adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Nick Killian** and seconded by **Councillor Gerry O'Connor**.

7. To adopt the Business Support Scheme, 2024 in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2001.

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

The Chief Executive concluded by thanking the Elected Members for their support in preparing and adopting Budget 2024. She stressed that focus would now switch to implementing it over the next 12 months. She acknowledged the Acting Head of Finance and her staff for their work in compiling the Draft Budget. 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 Acting Head of Finance and the Finance Team for their work.

This concluded the business of the meeting. The meeting concluded at 3.20pm.