

**Minutes of the Budget 2019 Meeting of Clare County Council held in the Council Chamber, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 at 3:00 p.m.**

**Present:**

Councillors J. Breen, J. Flynn, P. Daly, A. Norton, T. McNamara, M. Howard, P. Murphy, C. Colleran Molloy, J. Cooney, P. Hayes, M. Begley, P. Burke, A. O’Callaghan, C. Crowe, J. Crowe, G. Flynn, P.J. Ryan, P. McMahon, M. McKee, C. Curtin, R. Nagle, I. Lynch, P.J. Kelly, B. Chambers, G. Keating.

- Pat Dowling, Chief Executive.
- Ann Reynolds, Meetings Administrator.
- Margaret O’Rourke, Assistant Staff Officer.
- Noeleen Fitzgerald, A/Head of Finance.
- Anne Haugh, Director of Social Development.
- Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development.
- Leonard Cleary, Director of Rural Development.
- Carmel Kirby, Director of Physical Development.
- Caroline O’Connor, Management Accountant.
- Sean Lenihan, Senior Engineer.
- Siobhan McNulty, Senior Executive Officer.
- John Leahy, Senior Engineer.
- Leonore O’Neill, Senior Executive Officer.
- Cyril Feeney, Senior Engineer.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. M. Begley presided.

At the outset, the Cathaoirleach called on the Chief Executive, Pat Dowling to give a brief overview of the Budget.

Mr. Dowling advised that this budget represents another step on our journey of re-invigoration and is equally a further milestone after many years of challenge and difficulty. He stated that our annual budgetary process both current and capital has always been and continues to be about finding a balance, a trade off between our responsibility as a service provider, as a protector of the environment, as an employer, as a catalyst for economic development, as a voice for rural communities, as an advocate for the disadvantaged, as a deliverer of key infrastructural initiatives and as an organisation that can be counted on when it comes to potential crises and emergency situations.

He stated that Government’s policy “Public Service 2022” highlights a range of key challenges around public service provision into the future. They include globalisation and the increasing mobilisation of business, the economic recovery and how it is placing great demands on our local government system regarding congestion, waste and environmental pollution. New approaches will be needed to promote development of the local economy in towns, villages and more sparsely populated rural parts of the country.

He informed the members that our financial standing, while limited, puts us in a unique position. The new executive with its integrated and progressive attitude must for the future focus on three challenges:

1. To remain close to our communities (to listen, to learn, to respond).
2. To work in new ways (influencing, enabling and working through others).
3. To retain a concern for the welfare of our citizens beyond our statutory functions.

In 2017, local authorities spent €6.17 billion across 8 “service divisions”. In Clare we spent €145m in both current and capital accounts. Our task for the future ahead is to maximise the benefits accrued from this spend.

He referred to the decision taken by the members concerning the Local Property Tax for the period ahead and the need to generate increasing income. He assured the members that we will continue to press for increased government assistance and we eagerly await the outcome from our submissions under the URDF and the RRDF.

He stated that while our rural communities face an ongoing uphill battle, the last 2 years has seen increased funding across a range of areas. Clár, Community Facilities Scheme, Town/Village Renewal, LIS, SICAP, REDZ, etc 2017 = €3.65m. This continues to grow and will increase in future years. Clare is regarded as an exemplar of good practice in this area.

He informed the members that while we must be ambitious, expansionary and reformist in our approach, we must also exercise financial prudence. For over 25 years leading up to 2016, Clare County Council carried a deficit/loss in its annual accounts. At the height of this period the Council had an accumulated loss of over €m.

In 2016 and 2017, we returned a balanced situation with a slight surplus. We are on target to balance in the current year also.

He concluded by thanking the Cathaoirleach for his ongoing support, the members of the Corporate Policy Group and the Elected Members for the various discussions/meetings at Municipal District level and at county level. He particularly acknowledged the work of the Finance team under Noeleen Fitzgerald ably supported by Caroline O’Connor and staff in the preparation of this budget.

He recommended the Draft Budget 2019 to Council for consideration.

Cllr. P.J. Kelly subsequently queried the implications of Item No. 24 on the November Council meeting agenda. P. Dowling, Chief Executive informed Cllr. Kelly that there was no change to the printed draft budget and that the statutory process preceded the November Council meeting.

## **Social Development Directorate**

**Division A    Housing and Building**  
**Division F    Recreation & Amenity**

Cllr. G. Flynn, Chair of the Social Development Strategic Policy Committee addressed the meeting and provided a brief overview of activities for both Division A and F. Housing and Recreation & Amenity. He referred to the main issues contained in the Budget relevant to this area and under the remit of the S.P.C. for Social Development.

A number of queries were raised by members regarding this Directorate and legal expenses in general. Both A. Haugh, Director of Social Development and N. Fitzgerald, A/Head of Finance responded to all queries raised.

## **Physical Development Directorate**

**Division B    Road Transport and Safety**  
**Division C    Water Services**  
**Division E    Environmental Services**  
**Division G    Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare**

Cllr. J. Cooney, Chair of Physical Development Strategic Policy Committee addressed the meeting and provided a brief overview of activities for the divisions referred to above. He also referred to the capital expenditure stating that Clare County Council is advancing a considerable number of major capital projects through its recently established Project Management Office. Key projects include LNDR, Ennistymon Inner Relief Road, Killaloe By pass and Shannon Bridge Crossing, Flood Risk Projects and others.

A number of queries were raised by the members in relation to the following

- impact on local and regional road maintenance due to lack of funding and change in allocations proposed for 2019.
- Local Property Tax Equalisation fund
- Fire service operations
- L.I.S. schemes.

C. Kirby, Director of Physical Directorate and N. Fitzgerald, A/Head of Finance addressed these queries. P. Dowling, Chief Executive also addressed the L.I.S. query and informed the members that the Council will continue to apply to reduce the number waiting on approval for L.I.S.

## **Economic Development Directorate**

**Division D    Development Management**

Cllr. R. Nagle, Chair of the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee addressed the meeting. He referred to the main issues contained in the Budget relevant to this area which includes the statutory Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023, draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy the Ennis Data Centre Development Plan Variation and the development of third level educational facilities in County Clare. He also referred to the Doolin Visitor Services building, the Shannon town streetscape plan and the Shannon Town Park.

Queries were raised in relation to vacant sites levy, taking in charge, legal expenses, development contributions and economic development. L. Conneally, Director of Service and N. Fitzgerald, A/Head of Finance responded to the queries raised.

## **Rural Development Directorate**

### **Division D Development Management**

Cllr. P. Hayes, Chair of the Rural Development Strategic Policy Committee addressed the meeting providing a brief overview of the main activities in this area and the main items budgeted for in 2019. He stated that Clare launched the first county wide Rural Development Strategy and Rural Development Forum in the country. He also outlined the eight targets the Rural Development Strategy focuses on.

A number of queries were raised with regard to the area and L. Cleary, Director of Rural Development replied to the queries raised by the Members.

## **Support Services**

### **Division H Miscellaneous Services**

### **Division J Central Management Services**

Noeleen Fitzgerald, A/Head of Finance outlined activities proposed in this area and responded to queries raised in relation to service support costs.

The following was proposed by Cllr. P.J. Kelly and seconded by Cllrs. C. Curtin and I. Lynch.

“That all programme costs be reduced by .0025% to avoid reducing G.M.A. by €300,000”.

The Cathaoirleach ruled that this was not a valid amendment as the amendment must specify the exact budgets to be reduced. He stated that it is not possible to reduce all budgets.

Cllr. J. Cooney then proposed that the budget as presented be adopted, this was seconded by Cllr. T. McNamara.

The following proposal was read out by the Meetings Administrator, as proposed by Cllr. J. Cooney and seconded by Cllr. T. McNamara. The Cathaoirleach then called a vote on same.

*“That pursuant to Section 103 of the Local Government Act 2001 (substituted by Section 58 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014) the Draft Budget 2019 as presented by the Chief Executive is hereby adopted.”*

The vote on this proposal resulted as follows:

**In favour:** Cllrs. P. Daly, A. Norton, T. McNamara, C. Colleran Molloy, J. Cooney, P. Hayes, M. Begley, P. Burke, A. O’Callaghan, C. Crowe, J. Crowe, G. Flynn, P.J. Ryan, P. McMahon, M. McKee, R. Nagle, B. Chambers, G. Keating (18).

**Against:** Cllrs. J. Flynn, C. Curtin, I. Lynch, P.J. Kelly (4)

**Abstentions:** Cllrs. J. Breen, M. Howard (2).

The Cathaoirleach declared the resolution carried.

The following proposal was read out by the Meetings Administrator and was proposed by Cllr. T. McNamara and seconded by Cllr. G. Keating

*“That the Council hereby determine in accordance with the draft budget 2019 as presented by the Chief Executive, the General Annual Rate on Valuation for the County including the former Kilrush Town Council and Ennis Town Council of 72.99 set out in Table A.”*

The vote on this proposal resulted as follows:

**In favour:** Cllrs. P. Daly, A. Norton, T. McNamara, P. Murphy, C. Colleran Molloy, J. Cooney, P. Hayes, M. Begley, P. Burke, A. O’Callaghan, C. Crowe, J. Crowe, G. Flynn, P.J. Ryan, P. McMahon, M. McKee, R. Nagle, B. Chambers, G. Keating (19)

**Against:** Cllrs. J. Flynn, M. Howard, C. Curtin, I. Lynch, P.J. Kelly (5)

**Abstentions:** Cllr. J. Breen (1).

The Cathaoirleach declared the resolution carried.

The following proposal in relation to the rates incentive scheme was read out by the Meetings Administrator and was proposed by Cllr. P. Daly and seconded by Cllr. P.J. Ryan.

*“That the rates payment incentive grant scheme for 2019 in respect of occupied properties be as follows in respect of the areas set out below:*

<i>Former Ennis Town Council Area</i>	<i>9% of the 2019 Rates Cost or €450 if lower</i>
<i>Former Kilrush Town Council Area</i>	<i>12% of the 2019 Rates Cost or €600 if lower</i>
<i>Former County Council Area</i>	<i>3% of the 2019 Rates Cost or €100 if lower</i>

*where the rates are paid on time; or where there are established payment plans (or new payment plans that have been agreed in writing with the Council on or before July 31st 2019) which provide for the clearance of all the rates due by December 2019 and where the rates outstanding are actually cleared in line with the payment plan.”*

The vote on this proposal resulted as follows:

**In favour:** Cllrs. J. Flynn, P. Daly, A. Norton, T. McNamara, M. Howard, P. Murphy, C. Colleran Molloy, J. Cooney, P. Hayes, M. Begley, P. Burke, A. O’Callaghan, C. Crowe, J. Crowe, G. Flynn, P.J. Ryan, P. McMahan, M. McKee, C. Curtin, R. Nagle, I. Lynch, P.J. Kelly, B. Chambers, G. Keating (24)

**Against:** Cllrs. Nil. (0)

**Abstentions:** Cllr. J. Breen (1).

The Cathaoirleach declared the resolution carried.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the members, Chief Executive, Directors of Services and A/Head of Finance and their staff for their co-operation in the preparation and adoption of the Budget for 2019. He also thanked members of the Corporate Policy Group and all members for their input into the Budget process.

The meeting then concluded at 5:20 p.m.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Riarthóir Cruinnithe**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Cathaoirleach**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_