

Minutes of the Special Meeting of Clare County Council held in Glór, Ennis, Co. Clare on Monday, 21st September, 2020 at 2:30 p.m.

Present:

Councillors M. Howard, M. Nestor, J. Flynn, C. Colleran Molloy, P. Murphy, P. Daly, P. Hayes, A. O’Callaghan, T. O’Brien, J. Crowe, M. Begley, P.J. Ryan, P. McMahon, G. Flynn, D. McGettigan, P. O’Gorman, S. Talty, J. Killeen, J. Garrihy, P.J. Kelly, B. Chambers, G. Keating, C. Murphy.

- Mr. Pat Dowling, Chief Executive.
- Ms. Ann Reynolds, Meetings Administrator.
- Ms. Margaret O’Rourke, Assistant Staff Officer.
- Ms. Anne Haugh, Director of Social Development.
- Mr. Liam Conneally, Director of Economic Development.
- Mr. Leonard Cleary, Director of Rural Development.
- Ms. Carmel Kirby, Director of Physical Development.
- Ms. Noeleen Fitzgerald, Head of Finance.
- Ms. Trina Rynne, Financial Accountant.
- Ms. Caroline O’Connor, Management Accountant.

Absent: Cllrs. A. Norton, J. Cooney, P. Burke, S. Crawford and I. Lynch.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. M. Howard presided.

Local Property Tax (Local Adjustment Factor) Chief Executive’s Report was circulated with the agenda. The report was prepared in accordance with Local Property Tax regulations, Section 20 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 as amended by Section 5 of the Finance (Local Property tax) Act 2013. The report states that under legislation a local authority may as a reserved function resolve to vary the basic rate of the Local Property Tax in respect of relevant residential properties within its functional area by a maximum +/-15%.

The report continues that elected members will, as a reserved function, be required to adopt the 2021 statutory budget in November 2020. In advance of preparing budget 2021, the members are required to make a decision in relation to Local Property Tax income by 30th September in order that it can have effect from 1st November, which is the liability date for Revenue. Therefore in this context the report gave a broad outline of the emerging demands on services and expenditure budgets for the year 2021 that are known at this point.

It was noted that the elected members must take account of the financial position and have regard to a number of factors:

- i. The Local Authorities estimation of the income it will receive and the expenditure it will incur in the year 2021.
- ii. The financial position of the local authority.
- iii. The financial effect of the varied rate and
- iv. Feedback from the public consultation.

The report provided this information as required by regulation to the council relevant to the decision making process.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive addressed the meeting and stated that Clare County Council is facing an uncertain future regarding finances but this must be faced with resilience and confidence for a number of years. He informed the members that this is the first part in the Council's budgetary journey and there is a need to bring certainty where we can and where we have control. Mr. Dowling advised that the decision on the Local Property Tax for 2021 is a reserved function.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr. M. Howard then invited the members to discuss the issue to hand.

The elected members were agreeable to maintaining the current rate of local property tax and requested that the GMA remains the same or increase. The importance of delivering services locally was emphasised.

The members raised concern in relation to the equalisation fund and stated that money collected in Clare should be retained in our local authority. The elected members sought discretion to spend unspent training funds on GMA and requested that there be no reduction in services in rural Clare.

The elected members noted that a lot of money has been spent on Covid-19 and felt that this should be refunded by government as this will have an impact on the Councils budget. The elected members requested that these concerns be raised with the Oireachtas Members in Clare. Concern was raised in relation to agreeing the LPT before the budget is prepared.

Cllr. D. McGettigan stated that there should be a decrease in LPT as people are facing uncertainty and many have mortgages in distress.

P. Dowling, Chief Executive addressed the meeting and stated that Clare County Council are working diligently to maximise support from government. Mr. Dowling welcomed the comments in relation to the GMA and noted that this is a very important contributor to local communities and local development.

Ar moladh Cllr. G. Flynn

Cuidithe ag Cllr. P. Hayes agus glacadh leis

“That in accordance with the provisions of Section 20 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended), that the basic rate of local property tax should stand varied upwards by per cent 15% for the period 1 November 2020 to 31 October 2021, in respect of relevant residential properties situated in the administrative area of Clare County Council.”

Mr. Dowling thanked the Cathaoirleach and members for their considerations and noted their observations in relation to the equalisation fund which will be a central theme of discussion when he meets the Clare Oireachtas Members in the next week. Mr. Dowling also noted the members concerns in relation to agreeing the LPT before the budget and stated that the Council needs a level of income before the budget book can be prepared in order to leverage funding. He informed the meeting that Council officials will now proceed to prepare the budget book.

The meeting then concluded at 3:00 p.m.

Signed: _____
Riarthóir uinnithe

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Date: _____