

Kildare County Council

**Minutes of Budget Meeting held at 2.00pm on Monday,
21 November 2016 at Arás Chill Dara, Naas, Co Kildare**

Members Present: Councillor I Keatley, (Mayor), Councillors M Aspell, A Breen, A Breslin, F Brett, K Byrne, B Caldwell, M Coleman, R Cronin, I Cussen, M Dalton, S Doyle, T Durkan, C Kelly, P Kennedy, A Larkin, M Lynch, M McCabe, P McEvoy, J McGinley, M Miley, S Moore, J Neville, N O’Cearúil, S O’Neill, J Pender, R Power, S Power, T Redmond, D Scully, M Stafford, M Wall, P Ward, B Weld and B Young

Apologies: Councillors Callaghan, Fitzpatrick, Hillis, McLoughlin-Healy and Murray

Also Present: Mr P Carey (Chief Executive), Ms. E. Hanlon (Head of Finance), Messrs J Boland, P Minnock, T McDonnell, N Morrissey, Ms S Kavanagh, (Directors of Services), Ms M Mclvor (Meetings Administrator) and other officials.

Consideration of Budget

The Mayor welcomed the members to the meeting for consideration of the Draft Budget 2017 for Kildare County Council.

Due notice of regulation meeting and of the preparation of the budget having been given as required by law, the Council considered the draft budget for the year ending 31 December 2017. The draft budget provides for a gross expenditure of in excess of €143 million and an annual rate on valuation of €68.95.

The Mayor thanked the members who attended the briefing on the 14 November 2016 and he outlined the process for the meeting. He invited the Chief Executive to address the main issues contained in the Draft Budget and said that Ms Hanlon, Head of Finance would explain the statutory tables and that any questions from the members would be dealt with by the relevant Director of Services. The Mayor said that some amendments have been submitted in writing and that he proposed to take all amendments together at the end of the process before the adoption of the budget.

The Chief Executive thanked the Mayor and referred to his report which set the context for

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the 2017 Draft Budget which provides for expenditure of €143m, an increase of 4% from 2016.

The Chief Executive welcomed the provision of Leader and SICAP funding under D0601 and the general municipal allocation of €3,226,940 to be divided across the five municipal districts. He noted the additional provision for staff and said that the team had focused on the provision of funding in the areas where the members had identified deficiencies during the past year.

The Chief Executive welcomed the increase in the housing area, in particular the additional provision of €600,000 for the area of homelessness which continues to be a challenge not only at county level but at national level also. The regional road allocation and the significant €4m for public lighting were noted. The Economic Development unit continues to have a town centre focus and the shop-front scheme which was so successful in 2016 has been continued in this budget. The provision of additional resources for the Local Enterprise Office to be funded through Enterprise Ireland was welcomed. The Chief Executive took the opportunity to welcome Ms Jacqui McNabb, Head of Local Enterprise who has been appointed recently.

Street cleaning has been increased by €57,000 and the excellent work of the tidy towns groups was commended. The workforce plan for the library service has recently been approved and the strong network of service was noted. It is planned to have the Athy library ready by the end of 2017. Under the Parks and Recreation heading, the members have consistently requested assistance for Simon Wallace and provision for an additional resource has been included. Tourism with the launch of the Digital Platform, the Barrow Blueway and the Greenway in the north of the county are all important projects and provision has been made for support. There has been an increase in the number of planning applications and there has been provision made for increased resources in this area. There is no increase in the annual rate on valuation for the eighth year in a row and the ongoing harmonisation of rates between Athy and the rest of the county continues to take place. The non domestic water accounts will be transferred to Irish Water before the end of 2016. The Chief Executive thanked the Head of Finance and her team for their work in preparing this positive budget which positions Kildare to proactively support the community and provide strong leadership and balanced development.

The Head of Finance introduced the Revenue Budget 2017 and asked the members to note the 3 year Capital Programme for 2017-2019. Ms Hanlon explained the format and content of the statutory tables and provided background to the expenditure and income through each division, explaining the comparisons between 2016 and 2017.

The Mayor thanked the Head of Finance and the Chief Executive for their work. He said that any amendments proposed to this budget must identify the source of funding and that such amendments will be dealt with after questions from the members.

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The Mayor then proposed to go through each division and take questions which the relevant Director of Services will address.

Division A – Housing and Building

During consideration of this division, the members asked for clarification on the self help grant scheme, the response maintenance budget, scheme for replacement of windows and doors, NPPR, and the prioritisation of the Housing Adaptation grants for people with a disability over the Housing Aid for Older People grant. The possibility of a savings scheme for tenants was explored and the amount of income received through rents was discussed. The Chief Executive confirmed that there is a proposal to introduce a national rent scheme. The issue of loan charges and the requirement for the council to pay these charges was discussed. The members asked the Director to inform them of progress on the Housing Assistance Payment scheme and the Rental Accommodation scheme and they asked if the homelessness budget was adequate.

Mr McDonnell, Director of Services confirmed that as the self help scheme was late starting in 2016, the funding will be ring fenced for use in 2017 in addition to the allocation now proposed for 2017. He said that the response maintenance budget will be carefully managed and that there will be a planned maintenance response to the replacement of windows and doors in county council units depending on the availability of funding.

Ms Hanlon confirmed that the queries relating to NPPR are handled by the Customer Care staff in the Athy office.

Mr McDonnell outlined the activity levels within the three grant schemes and assured the members that the allocation will be spent by the end of the year. He outlined the progress on the RAS and the HAP scheme and said that the targets are being reached.

In relation to the funding for homelessness, Mr McDonnell said that based on the best information currently available, the budget should be adequate.

Division B – Road Transportation and Safety

During consideration of this division, the members referred to B0902, Operation of Street Parking, down from €1,465,000 to €1,436,277 and B0903 Parking Enforcement, down from €166,250 to €121,496 and the overall BO8, Road Safety down from €948,519 to €779,988.

Mr Morrissey, Director of Services explained the background to the figures.

The members paid tribute to the work of Declan Keogh, Road Safety Officer and while communication through social media is excellent, the continued use of the print media should also be encouraged.

The members noted an increase to B1001 the administration of the Roads Capital Programme and that in general the overall expenditure in the division is up by €1,176,396.

Mr Morrissey said that the Local Property Tax is recorded this year under Miscellaneous Services HO909 whereas it was recorded through each division in the 2016 budget so that is

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accounting for some of the change between 2016 and 2017.

There was reference to the €5m spent on local roads to repair the damage caused by material going to Drehid and the question of the encouragement of the use of more sustainable means of transport was discussed.

Division C – Water Services and Division E – Environmental Protection and Division G – Agriculture Education Health and Welfare

During consideration of these divisions, the members requested clarification on the transition to Irish Water, street cleaning, derelict sites, landfill aftercare, global valuation, dog licences, control of horses, and a recycling facility for the north of the county.

Mr Boland, Director of Services referred the members to the Irish Water Business Plan and the 12 year Service Level Agreement which effectively makes the council agents of Irish Water. He confirmed that non domestic water accounts will be transferred to Irish Water in December 2016. There is an additional €57,000 being provided for street cleaning and Mr Boland said that he would work closely with the Municipal District engineers to make the best possible use of this funding. The derelict sites provision, E1004, does not include acquisitions but this would not be an impediment to acquiring a derelict property as capital funding could be used as an interim measure until the acquisition was disposed of. Landfill aftercare, EO 103 relates to the maintenance required under licence of the Silliot Hill facility. Ms Hanlon confirmed that the global valuation was a revaluation in 2016 and the Department compensated the council by €640,000.

With regard to G0404, the operation of the dog warden service, Mr Boland outlined the cost of running the pound with 2 wardens and a caretaker. He noted the reduction in G0405 other animal welfare services including horse control from €220,000 in 2016 to €170,000 in 2017.

A presentation will be made to the members at the next Celbridge Leixlip Municipal Disrtrict meeting regarding a proposal for a recycling facility in the north of the county.

There was concern expressed that the report did not include a general statement on equality budgeting which could steer funding.

Ms Hanlon confirmed that the budget addressed the issue of equality through funding in the areas of homelessness, social inclusion, education, business, SICAP and LEADER funding.

Division D – Development Management and Division F – Recreation and Amenity

During consideration of these divisions the members referred to the significant increase on T17 under Community and Enterprise grants and welcomed the increase in the Local Enterprise Office/URBACT funding from €1,085,463 to €1,325,213. There was disappointment that the Unfinished Housing Estates was reduced from €668,000 to

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€635,000 and that Building Control Enforcement costs were reduced from €358,500 to €327,000. The members asked where the development levies are shown in the tables and are they expended at local level within the municipal district.

Mr Minnock, Director of Services explained the LEADER and SICAP funding and said that there are 3 elected members on the LCDC and that the applications for funding will be channeled through this committee. He informed the members that a new Senior Executive Planner has been appointed to head up the enforcement process.

Ms Kavanagh welcomed the provision for additional staff in the Local Enterprise Office and stated that this funding will be recouped from Enterprise Ireland.

Ms Hanlon explained that the development levies are shown in the Capital Programme.

Division H – Miscellaneous Services

During consideration of this Division, the members asked about the URBACT scheme.

Ms Kavanagh outlined the background to the scheme and informed the members that it is funded through an EU programme and is shown in this budget under Division D.

Ms Hanlon stated that the General Municipal Allocation is shown in this division under H0905 and this will be divided equally across the municipal districts for the members to prioritise projects for 2017.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Doyle, seconded by Councillor Miley, with all the members in agreement, the unspent local property tax and pay parking surplus for 2016 to be transferred to 2017.

The Mayor proposed to deal with the amendments submitted to the Meetings Administrator.

Amendment No 1 was proposed by Councillor Cussen and seconded by Councillor Redmond

That H0905 be reduced by €7.5k and this amount be reallocated to Environmental Services and ringfenced as emergency fund to be available to provide a part waiver to persons who will require financial assistance as they are deemed to have a specific need in respect of pay-by-weight bin charges. The criteria for same “a person in receipt of incontinence wear from HSE”. There are approx 1500 persons in Kildare.

Councillor Cussen outlined the reason for this amendment expressing her concern for this vulnerable sector.

Mr Boland, Director of Services stated that the feasibility of reintroducing a waiver scheme in respect of domestic refuse is problematic because the administration of a scheme based on a specific category of medical need would be difficult to administer. It could be argued that any such intervention should take place at national level, bearing in mind that the Council no

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longer provide this service.

The members contributed to a debate on the amendment and the Mayor called for a vote.

Resolved with 8 members voting in favour, 21 members voting against and no member abstaining, amendment No 1 was defeated

Amendment No. 2 (alternative to Amendment No 1) was proposed by Councillor Cussen and seconded by Councillor Redmond

That inservice training allocation for councillors can be reduced by any member voluntarily at Budget and the monies from this reduction be ringfenced within Environmental Services as an emergency fund to be available to provide a part waiver to persons who will require financial assistance as they are deemed to have a specific need in respect of pay-by-weight bin charges. The criteria for same “a person in receipt of incontinence wear from HSE”. There are approx 1500 persons in Kildare.

Resolved with 7 members voting in favour, 22 members voting against and no member abstaining, amendment No. 2 was defeated

Amendment No 3 was proposed by Councillor Cussen and seconded by Councillor Redmond.

That revenue from dog licenses from 2016 be used to purchase additional bins for each Municipal District. Revenue to date for 2016 is €49,607.50 with 2588 licenses issued.

Ms Hanlon, Head of Finance stated that this revenue was 2016 income and was already allocated through the 2016 budgetary process.

Councillor Cussen asked that the text be changed to read 2017.

The Mayor deemed amendment No 3 invalid as the matching reduction in expenditure was not identified.

Amendment No 4 was proposed by Councillor Cussen and seconded by Councillor Redmond.

That monitored CCTV be provided to identified cemeteries, blackspots and playgrounds in our municipal districts to target illegal dumping and vandalism. This will self fund in a short period of time by virtue of increased revenue from fines.

Mr Boland, Director of Services stated that regrettably illegal dumping is taking place in a number of cemeteries throughout the county and he agreed that this was a very worthwhile suggestion and he said that he will pilot it from existing resources in 2017.

Councillor Cussen thanked the Director for this positive response.

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Amendment No 5 was proposed by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Pender.

KCC resolves not to pay €400,000 (page KF1) from LPT money for interest on voluntary housing finance; we demand that such interest be paid by the relevant department of central government; we resolve instead to put that €400,000 into the Homelessness budget to facilitate greater access to emergency accommodation.

Ms Hanlon, Head of Finance stated that there is a legal contractual obligation on Kildare County Council to pay these chargers.

The Mayor asked the members to vote on the proposed amendment.

Resolved with 7 members voting in favour, 18 members voting against and 2 members abstaining, amendment no 5 was defeated.

Amendment No 6 was proposed by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Pender

KCC resolves to take €20,000 from the Twinning budget and transfer it to the Homelessness budget to facilitate greater access to emergency accommodation.

In proposing this amendment, Councillor Young said that this was a question of prioritising. He said that this would ensure access to emergency accommodation over the Christmas period.

Following a debate on this proposed amendment, the Mayor called on the members to vote on the proposed amendment.

Resolved with 2 members voting in favour, 29 members voting against and no member abstaining, amendment no 6 was defeated.

Amendment No 7 was proposed by Councillor Lynch and seconded by Councillor Cussen

That this council re-directs T26, H908 towards unfinished housing estates

Ms Hanlon, Head of Finance confirmed that her understanding was that the contributions to be paid under HO908 were statutory.

Councillor Lynch confirmed to the Meetings Adminisrtator that he was withdrawing this amendment .

Amendment No 8 was proposed by Councillor Lynch and seconded by Councillor Cussen

That this council redirects T26, H908 towards housing and homelessness.

Ms Hanlon, Head of Finance confirmed that her understanding was that the contributions required under HO908 were statutory.

Councillor Lynch confirmed to the Meetings Adminisrtator that he was withdrawing this amendment.

Adoption of Budget

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Power, seconded by Councillor Weld with 27 members voting in favour, 6 members voting against and no abstentions, that pursuant to Section 103(7) of the Local Government Act 2001, Kildare County Council do hereby adopt for the financial year ending 31 December 2017 the budget set out in tables A, B, C, D and E of the draft budget presented to the Council and do hereby determine in accordance with the said budget the annual rate on valuation set out in Tables A to E of €68.95 to be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for that year for the purposes set out in those tables.

Base Year Adjustments

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Miley seconded by Councillor McEvoy, with 26 members voting in favour, 7 members voting against and no abstentions that in accordance with Section 29 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, that the Base Year Adjustments in Tables A and C of the Draft Budget 2017 presented to Council between former town rating authorities of Naas and Athy be adopted as presented

Vacancy Relief

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Miley, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, with 26 members voting in favour, 7 members voting against and no abstentions that this council continue to effect vacant premises relief as outlined in Section 14 of the Local Government Act 1946

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Power, seconded by Councillor Weld, that the Capital Budget 2018 – 2019 be noted

The Mayor and members thanked the Chief Executive, Ms Hanlon and her team for their work in the preparation of this budget.

The meeting concluded.
