

**WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL**

***Minutes of Statutory Budget Meeting of  
Wexford County Council  
Held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 10.00 a.m.  
In the Council Chamber, County Hall, Carricklawn, Wexford.***  
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**Attendance:**

In the Chair: Councillor M. Sheehan, Cathaoirleach.

**Councillors:** P. Barden; M. Bell; P. Breen; A. Browne;  
C. Byrne; G. Carthy; J. Codd; K. Codd Nolan;  
A. Connick; D. Devereux; M. Farrell; J. Fleming;  
T. Forde; J. Hegarty; W. Kavanagh; L. Kelly;  
D. Kenny; G. Laffan; L. McDonald; J. Moore;  
B.A. Murphy; J. O'Rourke; F. O' Súilleabháin; J. Owens;  
F. Staples; J. Sullivan; O. Walsh; M. Whelan.

**Officials:** Mr. T. Enright, Chief Executive;  
T. Larkin, E. Hore, J. Carley, E. Taaffe, Directors of Services;  
Ms. A. O'Neill, Head of Finance;  
Mr. P. Collins, County Secretary.

**Apologies:** Councillors: M. Byrne; A. Donohoe; B. Murphy.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the Councillors to the meeting and set out the order of the day. He advised new Members of the importance of the Budget Meeting and that the passing of the Budget was a Reserved Function of the Council.

He also advised that the consideration of the items in the budget was the opportunity to clarify any issues with regard to any monies in the budget and that any questions asked would be answered by the Head of Finance and Council Officials in attendance.

**1. Opening Address – Mr. T. Enright, Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of today's meeting where the Councillors have an important role to consider the budget as proposed and to adopt or amend the budget as appropriate. He advised that expenditure of €127.5m is contained in the budget, an increase of €10.6m over 2019 and includes an extra provision of €2m for the Roads Programme and this growth in the budget is positive for the delivery of local services in the county. He then spoke about a number of significant and strategic capital expenditure items that had occurred and are planned in Wexford, including the Enniscorthy bypass which was completed in 2019 and which allowed great connectivity to other parts of the country in particular Dublin, the New Ross Bypass which will be finished shortly and will again increase the connectivity and activity for County Wexford with other parts of the country, the €50m flood relief scheme in Enniscorthy which will be starting shortly and the positive impact this will have on Enniscorthy.

The Chief Executive also referenced the positive progress made during the last year on the Economic and community Development Programme including the Enniscorthy Technology Park, New Ross Greenway, Min Ryan Park – 18 acres of public park which will be open very shortly, the Crescent Quay Development, the Georgia Campus setting up in old County Hall in Wexford, the new outdoor activity centre in Forth Mountain which has commenced recently. He further noted that work is ongoing on Gorey Town Park and will be nearing completion in Quarter 1 2020. He also highlighted a marked increase in foreign direct investment in County Wexford – 200 jobs had been created by the IDA in two separate projects and other companies are also looking at Wexford as a location for their business.

He thanked Tony Larkin and his staff in Economic Development for making many of these projects happen and he advised that the catalyst for this interest in County Wexford was the new building in Gorey which had attracted a lot of people into the county to look at facilities available and to look at the county in general as a location for business.

The Chief Executive also noted that the Valuation Office had carried out a complete revaluation of rated properties in County Wexford and this modernisation of valuation now forms part of the budget to be considered for 2020.

The Chief Executive acknowledged the work of the Head of Finance, Annette O'Neill, and her team, for their work in the preparation of the 2020 budget and also noted the Head of Finance's role as the Chairperson of national Heads of Finance Association and the work undertaken by this group in securing legislative changes to protect financial assets of local authorities with the inclusion of funding provision to offset the effect of lost rates secured on properties appealing their valuation following revaluation. He also thanked all of the Directors for their input in the preparation of the budget and advised members that Director of Services, John Carley, will be retiring on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019

He also took the opportunity to thank the Members for their time and commitment over the last few months, at both District and County Council level, in considering and approving the various stages of the budget process.

## **2. Budget Overview – Presentation**

Ms. A. O'Neill, Head of Finance, presented an overview of the Budget 2020 and provided commentary on specific factors informing the budgets under the following headings:

- Local Property Tax
- Rates Revaluation Programme
- Commercial Rates 2020 & Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV)
- Rates on Vacant Properties
- General Municipal Allocations
- Rates Incentive Scheme 2020 (RIS)
- Special Rates Incentive Scheme – NRTC & ETC
- Overview of Expenditure & Income Movements 2020
- Budget Tables

The Head of Finance also set out other local and national financial considerations impacting on and informing the preparation and delivery of Wexford County Council's budget for 2020 including the legislative change to the calculation of the Annual Rates on Valuation in this year of Rates Revaluation in the county. Members asked questions with regard to many of the items included in the overview and each query was addressed. The Head of Finance then outlined the three decisions that the Council would be required to make at today's meeting, following consideration of Statutory Budget Tables:

- Level of Rates to be applied to Vacant Premises
- Adopt Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) for 2020
- Adopt 2020 Budget with or without amendment

At 10.53 a.m. Cllr. J. Hegarty arrived.

At 10.57 a.m. Cllr. J. Moore arrived.

At 10.58 a.m. Cllr. J. O'Rourke arrived.

At 11.04 a.m. Cllr. O. Walsh arrived.

At 11.10 a.m. Cllr. L. Kelly arrived.

At 11.37 a.m. Cllr. L. McDonald arrived.

At 11.53 a.m. Cllr. J. Owens arrived.

At 11.58 a.m. Cllr. J. Codd left the meeting.

At 12.45 p.m. the Cathaoirleach had to leave the meeting and Cllr. L. McDonald, Leas Chathaoirleach, took the Chair.

At 12.51 p.m. Cllr. D. Devereux left the meeting.

At 12.55 p.m. Cllr. J. Owens left the meeting.

At 12.58 p.m. the Cathaoirleach returned to the Chair.

At 13.02 p.m. Cllr. L. Kelly left the meeting.

### **3. Budget 2020**

The Head of Finance then took the members through each budget line included in the statutory tables in the draft budget under each of the Service Divisions A-H and these were considered by the Council. Queries raised by the Members in all of the Service Divisions were answered by the Head of Finance, Chief Executive and by other Council Officials in attendance.

A number of decisions were then made:

- **Decision on Rates to be applied to Vacant Properties**

On the proposal of Cllr. B. A. Murphy, seconded by Cllr. M. Farrell, the Members agreed unanimously that the owners of vacant premises in all local electoral areas within the Council's administrative area shall be entitled to claim and receive a refund of a maximum of 90% of the total annual commercial rates applicable to that premises. This proposal was agreed by all and adopted.

- **Adoption of Annual Rate on Valuation(ARV) of €0.246**

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Fleming seconded by Cllr. W. Kavanagh the Members resolved to approve and adopt the Annual Rate on Valuation of €0.246. This was agreed by all and adopted.

- **Decision on Adoption of the Statutory Budget for Wexford County Council with or without amendment**

On the proposal of Cllr. P. Breen, seconded by Cllr. J. O'Rourke, the Members adopted the Statutory Budget for Wexford County Council for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020 as proposed and without amendment.

This was agreed by all present and adopted.

The Cathaoirleach then thanked Ms. A. O'Neill, Head of Finance, and her team for the hard work they had undertaken in preparing the 2020 budget. He also thanked Seamus Begley and Lynda Lacey, Finance Department who had attended the meeting.

Congratulations were echoed by Cllr. O. Walsh, F. Staples, J. Hegarty, F. OSúilleabháin, G. Carthy, J. O'Rourke, J. Sullivan and J. Fleming.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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County Secretary.

Daingnithe ar an \_\_\_\_\_la de Nollaig, 2019.

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Cathaoirleach