

WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

***Minutes of Statutory Budget Meeting of
Wexford County Council
Held on Monday 26th November 2018 at 10.00 a.m.
In the Council Chamber, County Hall, Carricklawn, Wexford.***

Attendance:

In the Chair: Councillor K. Doyle, Cathaoirleach.

Councillors:

P.Breen;	M. Byrne;	G. Carthy;	K. Codd Nolan;
T. Dempsey;	M. Farrell;	J. Fleming;	J. Hegarty;
D. Hynes;	R. Ireton;	W. Kavanagh;	G. Lawlor;
L. McDonald;	J. Moore,	BA Murphy,	J. Mythen,
L. O'Brien;	O. O'Connell,	J. O'Rourke,	F. ÓSúilleabháin;
M. Roche,	J. Sullivan,	O. Walsh;	T. 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: A. Connick; A. Donohoe; W. Fitzharris; P. Kavanagh;
M. Murphy; M. Sheehan; F. Staples.

At the outset Cllr. W. Kavanagh proposed a vote of sympathy to the Whelan and Kinsella family of Oylegate and Wexford who lost their son Jack in tragic circumstances over the weekend.

The Chief Executive briefed the Members regarding refugees who had been moved to the Hotel Rosslare hotel in Rosslare Harbour over the weekend. He advised that he had contacted the Department of Justice who informed him that 17 refugees had been moved into Hotel Rosslare over the weekend as an emergency measure. The Chief Executive also confirmed that the refugees have now left the hotel.

He also advised that he had received a commitment from the Department of Justice that they will not use any hotel in County Wexford for direct provision for refugees without prior notification to Wexford County Council and the Members of Wexford County Council.

Members then raised issues with regard to the lack of infrastructure (e.g. community centre, school places etc.) in place in Rosslare Harbour which makes it unsuitable for a direct provision site. The Cathaoirleach asked that this matter be included as an agenda item on the December 2018 meeting of the Council so that the Council can be notified of any updates with regard to direct provision.

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

The Chief Executive noted that the Council had come through a difficult decade during which time it built up a revenue deficit of over €11m which, thanks to the hard work of staff and decisions made by the Council, has now been reduced to under €5m. He noted that this debt must still be cleared off the books over the next number of years.

In 2018, the Chief Executive brought the Economic & Community Development Programme to the Council which was subsequently circulated to every household in the county. The Programme was very well received and showed the general public where their money was being spent.

The Chief Executive also advised that the Council cannot rely on government funding and must raise money itself. The Council has to increase its income to allow it to borrow and ringfence investment to address socio-economic issue highlighted in the AIRO Reports.

The Chief Executive noted that the Council had recently received approval for €15m borrowing from the Department. However he noted that the Council can only have access to borrowing if it can show that it is in a position to repay the amounts borrowed.

It is the Chief Executive's intention to issue a brochure to every household in the County in the Spring of 2019 to show the progress made on the Economic & Community Development Programme to date. He also noted that there is not full employment in County Wexford similar to other parts of the country and young people are still leaving the county both for college and for work.

The Chief Executive then updated the meeting with progress on headline economic and community development projects throughout the county, including the Innovation Centre in Gorey, the Enniscorthy Technology Park, the Advance Technology building in New Ross, the site for an Innovation Centre in New Ross, Min Ryan Park in Wexford, extension to Orchard Park in Enniscorthy, Gorey Park and plans for High Hill in New Ross.

He concluded by saying that only through the Members support can these developments happen and he thanked the Members for supporting the proposals for economic and community development. He thanked Ms. A. O'Neill, Head of Finance, and her staff for preparing the budget and also thanked the Directors of Services for their input into the budget process.

2. Budget Overview – Presentation

Ms. A. O'Neill, Head of Finance, made a presentation which gave an overview of the main factors informing the preparation of the Draft Budget 2019 under the following headings:

- Budget considerations for 2019
- Financial Considerations for 2019
- New/increased provisions for 2019

- Increase of €7.4m in the budget
- Sources of funding to meet the increase in expenditure
- Staff cost implications 2019
- Draft Budgetary Plans 2019 - GMA Allocations
- 2019 LPT Allocation
- 2019 Commercial rates.
- 2019 Revaluation Process

The Head of Finance then outlined the four decisions that the Council would have to make at today's meeting, following consideration of Statutory Budget Tables:

- Level of Rates to be applied to Vacant Premises
- Changes to Special Rates Incentive Scheme
- Adopt Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) for 2019
- Adopt 2019 Budget with or without amendment

The Head of Finance then answered queries from the Members regarding her presentation including the following items:

- Vacant premises
- Rates revaluation
- The basis for rates revaluation
- Road grants
- Clarification on the revaluation of charities
- Harmonisation of the rates throughout the county

3. Budget 2019

The Head of Finance then took the members through the detail in each page of the draft budget for each of the Service Divisions A-H and queries raised by members in all of the programme groups 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. G. Lawlor, seconded by Cllr. J. Moore, the Members resolved to approve the following motion in respect of the Vacant Premises Scheme for 2019.

In accordance with Section 31 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 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.

- **Agreement of proposals for Rates Incentive Scheme (RIS) and Special Rates Incentive Scheme (SRIS)**

On the proposal of Cllr. J. Moore seconded by Cllr. T. Dempsey the Members resolved to approve the 2019 Standard Rates Incentive Scheme and the 2019 Special Rates Incentive Scheme, both of which had been proposed by the Head of Finance in her Budget Overview presentation to the Members earlier in the meeting.

The motion was agreed by all with the exception of Cllr. R. Ireton who voted against.

- **Movement of 0% and adopting Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) of €73.67**

On the proposal of Cllr. R. Ireton, seconded by Cllr. J. Mythen the Members resolved to approve the following motion in respect of a movement of 0% and adopting the Annual Rate on Valuation of €73.67

In accordance with Sections 102-103 of the Local Government Act 2001 and with the provisions of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 that the ARV applicable in the whole rating area in County Wexford is held at its current rate of €73.67.

This motion 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. M. Byrne, the Members adopted the following motion with regard to the Statutory Budget for Wexford County Council for the financial year ending 31st December, 2019:

In accordance with Sections 102-103 of the Local Government Act 2001 and with the provisions of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, that the draft Budget as set out in Tables A to H of the prescribed form of Budget prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended) and Local Government Financial Procedures and Audit Regulations 2002 presented to Members, is adopted without change.

The motion was agreed by all 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 2019 budget. This thanks and congratulations were echoed by Cllr. J. Moore, Cllr. T. Dempsey, Cllr. J. Mythen and Cllr. G. Lawlor.

The Chief Executive thanked the Cathaoirleach and Members of the Council for approval of the budget. He advised that it is an expansionary budget with proposed expenditure increased to almost €117m and that staff numbers will be increased in 2019. He also acknowledged that 2019 is an election year and wished Members the best of luck in the forthcoming elections.

Statutory Budget Meeting 26.11.18

In conclusion, the Cathaoirleach thanked the Members for dealing with the Budget in a professional and constructive manner.

This concluded the business of the meeting.



County Secretary.

Daingnithe ar an 10^u la de Nollaig, 2018.



Cathaoirleach

