MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF BUDGET MEETING OF TIPPERARY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE CIVIC OFFICES, CLONMEL, COUNTY TIPPERARY AT 10.AM ON 22nd NOVEMBER, 2019

Present Cllr. Ml Murphy, Cathaoirleach

Cllrs: Ahearn, G; Ambrose, S; Anglim, M; Black, T; Bonfield, F; Bugler, P; Burgess, D; Carroll, J; Coonan, N.J; Crosse, J; Darcy, G; Dennehy, N.P; Dunne, D; FitzGerald, MI; Goldsboro, I; Hanafin, S; Hannigan, J; Hourigan, Mary Hanna; Kennedy, R; Lee, S; Lowry, M; McGrath (Rocky), J; McGrath, M; Moloney, A; Moran, E; Murphy, Marie; O’Meara, K; O’Meara, MI; Ryan (Shiner), A; Ryan, J; Ryan, P; Ryan, S; Smith, M.


Apologies Cllrs. K. Bourke, Pat English, Mark Fitzgerald, H. McGrath, R. Molloy, S. Morris

Chief Executives
Introduction to the Budget.

Mr. Joe MacGrath, Chief Executive, informed the members that the draft Annual Budget had been prepared on the principle of a “balanced budget” based on the overall level of resources available to the Council and the requirement to meet statutory, contractual, legal and other obligations, It had been prepared in the prescribed format and in compliance with the provisions of the Local Government Acts and Regulations made under that legislation. The Budget Meeting was being held within the prescribed statutory period as set out in Circular Fin 07/2019.

He noted that the Council was being asked to consider the Draft Budget and following that consideration to make the following decisions:

- To adopt the Annual Budget with or without amendment;
- To adopt the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV)
- To determine the proportion of rates refunds applicable on vacant commercial premises.

In the Chief Executive’s Introduction to the Budget contained in the document circulated to the members, the national and local economic context was set out against which this Budget has been prepared with particular reference to projected economic growth, unemployment and tourism activity and the Budget before the members had been prepared against an external economic environment which had become more challenging.

The key elements of the Strategy which informed and underpinned the preparation of the Budget were to;

- maintain essential and other local authority services,
- continue the programme of supports to our communities,
- support the economic recovery process locally and
• seek continued efficiencies in service provision, cost reduction and value for money.

The Budget Process had included various meetings at District level and Workshops.

The Chief Executive referred to Expenditure contained in the Draft Budget which had made provision for all necessary statutory, contractual and essential expenditure to assure the continued and, in some cases, enhanced provision of local services in 2020. Provision had been made for cost increases, the determination of which is largely outside the control of this Council.

In previous budgets the Chief Executive had highlighted concerns at continuing increases in insurance premia and now reported that the position appeared to be stabilised. All main expenditure headings have been maintained and in some cases increased on 2019 levels.

In relation to Income contained in the Draft Budget, the very significant challenge presented to the Council in meeting public expectation for additional services in the absence of additional income was highlighted. The Council over the past 5 years had operated in a financial environment where costs were increasing while main income headings were capped. This was financially unsustainable and must be addressed if expectations for increased services, delivery of projects and local economic growth were to be achieved. Against this background, the decision by the majority of Members at the September monthly meeting of Tipperary County Council to increase the adjustment factor applied to LPT by plus 10% was welcome. Arising from this decision, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government confirmed by Circular Letter Fin 08/2019 of the 10th October, 2019 that the Council’s 2020 allocation had been increased by €1,185,357 to €27,136,959.

The Draft Budget reflected the agreement at the September meeting and provided that 50% of this was apportioned as an additional allocation to the General Municipal Allocation (GMA) with the remaining 50% being apportioned to support co-funded projects. It assured a very sizeable increase in the GMA available to each of the Districts. Decisions on the allocation of the GMA would be made at District Level.

In relation to co-funded projects, the Council had met with some success in securing funds under the Urban and Rural Regeneration funds. 2 of the 3 applications submitted under the urban fund have been successful as had 2 of the 3 applications submitted under the rural fund. An additional application also succeeded under this heading.

In relation to revenue income collections across all main income headings remain healthy. Targets set for 2019 of 85% for housing loans, 84.46% for rates and 95% for housing rents were all expected to be achieved. The Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act, 2019 contained a number of amending and updated provisions in the law relating to the collection of rates which were outlined in the Introduction in the Budget Book. A number of the provisions of this legislation had yet to be enacted.

Members were aware that the National Revaluation Programme involving a
reassessment of the rateable value of all properties liable to commercial rates in the county had been undertaken by the Valuation Office throughout 2019. The process was revenue neutral for the Council as the revaluation process was essentially about the redistribution of rates liability. The Valuation Act, 2001 (Tipperary County Council) (Rate Limitation) Order, 2019 required that Tipperary County Council, in exercising its powers to make rates for the financial year 2020, did so in a way to ensure that the total amount of rates liable to be paid to the Council did not exceed an amount determined in accordance with the formula set out in the Valuation Act, 2001.

Accordingly, in compliance with the legislation and the Rates Limitation Order, the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) for Tipperary County Council for 2020 would be 0.1919 which was less than the indicative ARV of 0.21 indicated in March 2019. For individual rate payers, this would translate into reduced rate demands for c.64% of properties, increased rate demands for c. 32% of properties and no change for c. 4% of properties. The revised ARV for Tipperary of 0.1919 was now one of the lowest and most competitive rates in the country.

Section 9 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act, 2019 provided for a revised procedure to enable local authorities to make a scheme providing for the abatement of rates in respect of vacant properties. The Section of the Act had not yet been enacted and accordingly any decision to provide for refunds on commercial properties must, in the context of the 2020 Budget, be made in compliance with Section 31 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.

Members were aware that the Council currently applied a refund of 100% of commercial rates subject to compliance with certain conditions including the requirement that the property be made available for rent or lease. The ongoing operation of this measure had been assessed during the year and there was some evidence to suggest that the application of a full refund of commercial rates could be dis-incentivising the supply of properties of scale which were capable of attracting employment or generating other economic activity at a local level. It was also evident that any move away from the application of a full refund would place an undue burden on the owners of smaller vacant properties. For these reasons and bearing in mind that 2020 would be the first year of introduction, it was recommended that from a local economic stimulus perspective:

- A graduated scheme for the application of rates refunds be adopted for 2020.
- The application of this revised scheme be reviewed during the course of the new year to assess its effectiveness and practical applicability.

He stated that the Draft Budget had been prepared on the basis that rateable properties which were liable in 2020 to rates of less than €4,000 would qualify for a 100% rates rebate. The setting of the threshold at this level effectively removed all smaller properties from rates liability subject to the usual conditions. Rateable properties with a rates liability of between €4,000 and €7,000 would qualify for an 85% rebate while those greater than €7,000 would qualify for a 70% rebate. The Draft Budget for 2020 has been prepared on the basis that the commercial incentives scheme and the early payments scheme for commercial rates would be continued in 2020, albeit with some amendments to reflect the revised valuations now applying.

The preparation and presentation of the Draft Budget for 2020 had been made possible by the commitment of all staff across the organisation.
The Chief Executive, thanked Mr. Liam McCarthy, Head of Finance and the staff in the Finance Department for their work in the preparation of the Budget. He expressed his appreciation to the Cathaoirleach Councillor Michael Murphy and the Members of the Corporate Policy Group for their input in the preparation of the Draft Budget.

Mr. MacGrath summarised and concluded that despite the very considerable challenges being faced, the Draft Budget presented for consideration was positive, pro-business and progressive. It involved a spend of some €173,713,931 and ensures that:

- 2 out of every 3 ratepayers will pay less rates in 2020 than in 2019. Tipperary is now one of the lowest cost locations in which to start up a new business and to generate inward investment.
- Charges across services generally have not been increased.
- No reductions in expenditure and in some cases increased resourcing of services.
- The budget supports co-funding measures which are attracting millions of euro of investment to our county, particularly under the urban and rural regeneration funds.
- Local community, environmental and tidy towns groups will benefit from the enhanced general municipal allocations.

**Budget 2019**

Liam McCarthy, Head of Finance gave a detailed presentation on the Budget 2020 process, the key issues/constraints on income and expenditure that had to be considered and detailed the rates revaluation process that had been undertaken in 2019. This review had resulted in Tipperary now having one of the lowest and most competitive Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) in the Country.

The Cathaoirleach proposed that questions would be taken from members under Divisions A to E separately and Division F to J together. This was agreed.

**Housing and Building**

Members considered the Housing and Building Division Group and raised matters which Mr. Ms. Sinead Carr, Director of Services and Mr. Jonathan Cooney, A/SE. responded to:

**Vacant Local Authority Houses (Voids)** It was noted that the procedures and processes for the refurbishment of vacant local authority houses was being re-examined as a key priority for the Housing Section in 2020. Mr. J Cooney, Senior Engineer and Mr. J. Dillon, A.O. Housing Section would lead this review and report to the S.P.C. Together with this review the housing allocation process would be examined as currently this Council had a 25% refusal rate.

Members spoke in support of any measures that could be taken to ensure a quicker turn-around time.

**Planned Maintenance Programme**

The replacement of doors and windows in tenanted houses would be considered as part of the Planned Maintenance Programme and Energy Efficiency Review and would be carried out on a phased basis having regard to available
resources.

It was noted that phase 1 of the Energy Efficiency Scheme was now completed and phase 2 would be commenced during 2020. Phase 2 would examine poor performance single glazed windows and doors and internal dry lining.

Disabled Persons Grants and Essential Repairs Grants

The Council would continue to engage with the Department to stress the need for extra funding for these grant schemes due to the high demand. It was noted that there was a significant review of the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme being undertaken at Department level and members would be advised of the outcome of this review.

Tenant Purchase Scheme

The review of the Tenant Purchase Scheme was currently being reviewed at Department level and members would be informed when this review was completed.

4 Bed Dwellings

The shortage of 4 bed and 1 bed dwellings in the current housing stock was noted and this would be examined in 2020.

Traveller Accommodation

The Council had exceeded its target of 15 units of accommodation for travellers in 2019 with 21 households accommodated to date. Two sites had been identified for traveller specific accommodation improvements in 2019 but structural issues on these sites had to be addressed prior to proceeding with any refurbishment plans. The capital works would now commence in 2020 on these two sites.

Repair and Lease and Buy and Renew Schemes

The Council’s Vacant House Officer continued to work with interested parties on the promotion of these schemes.

Delivery of Social Units

This Council had exceeded its target of 173 new social units for 2019 with a projected delivery of 225 units. The target to achieve for 2020 is 203 and 2021 is 243.

Radon Levels Tipperary

It was noted that there was a variation in Radon Levels across the County.

Land Development Agency

Mr. Joe MacGrath, Chief Executive, responded to a query on the Land Development Agency.

The Land Development Agency (LDA) was a commercial State-sponsored body that has been created to coordinate land within State control for more optimal uses where appropriate, with a focus on the provision of new homes. The LDA was established on 13th September, 2018 and enabling legislation was currently going through the legislative process. Mr MacGrath confirmed that Tipperary County Council was not currently engaging with the L.D.A. regarding land in Tipperary and he would advise members through the Management Report should that position change.
Members then considered the Road, Transportation & Safety Group and raised matters which Mr. Eamon Lonergan, A/D.O.S., and Mr. John Nolan, Senior Engineer responded to:-

**Tipperary Town – N24 Main Street and N74 Fr. Matthew Street**
Consultation would take place with stakeholders before the commencement of works and traffic management issues would be examined.

**N.24 Waterford to Limerick Scheme**
This section of road was contained in the National Development Plan 2018-2027.

**N.24 Ballydrehid Bends to Toureen Cross**
Preliminary proposals for this scheme were being prepared. This scheme was problematic due to the large amount of bends and included a school and railway bridge to be accommodated.

**N24 Waterford to Cahir**
Kilkenny County Council was the lead authority for this scheme and advertisements were being placed for Consultants to project manage the planning and design of this scheme.

**Tipperary Ring Road**
The feasibility of a ring road would be reviewed having regard to the main N24 Cahir to Limerick Junction Scheme.

**Local Roads**
The maintenance of local roads was problematic due to the amount of road network, climate and location factors. The Roads Section would continue to seek additional funding from the Department.

**Road Maintenance**
To ensure Value for Money was being obtained, a Specific Quality Section had been established inhouse and would examine and monitor road works being carried out. It was noted that the Pavement Survey Condition Index (PSCI) was in place to measure and monitor the condition of Regional and Local Roads.

**Public Lighting**
The upgrading of public lights to LED would continue in 2020 with the focus on reducing energy consumption.
30 new street lights were provided in 2019 in various locations across the county and it was a matter for each District to consider as part of their GMA, subject to compliance with the Council’s Public Lighting Policy.

**Clonbeg Bridge**
Works to this bridge were deferred due to the requirement to carry out a Natura Impact Statement.

**Golden Bridge**
Improvement works to this bridge were discussed at the annual meeting with T.I.I.

**Car Park Charges**
In response to requests for free on street parking in towns, members were
urged caution in the consideration of such a decision. The turnover of parking in
town centres was vital to the economy of businesses. Christmas Parking
arrangements were a matter for each District and varied across the County.
Harmonisation of Parking Fees across the county was not an option as no one
size fits all. It would be a matter for each District to prepare a Parking Strategy
having regard to their own needs and resources. Studies had shown that free
parking had a detrimental impact on towns.

The Chief Executive, Mr. Joe MacGrath also clarified the position with regard to
Christmas Parking arrangements in Tipperary Town which were specific to the
Christmas Period only and revenue neutral. He stressed that any new measures
proposed to be introduced in any of the Districts would have to be revenue
neutral within that District and Councillors would need to be careful about
introducing free parking and the negative impact on the economy.

Road condition between Thurles and Nenagh.
Road conditions in the vicinity of “The Ragg” would be examined.

Managing Diversions/Detours on National Routes
Flashing Lights/signage, alternative routes and liaison with neighbouring
authorities would receive consideration in an effort to improve diversion
management.

Clar Areas
It was agreed to discuss with the Department the designation of Killaloan as a
Clar area due to the lack of residents in the area.

Water Supply and Waste Water

Members then considered the Water Supply and Waste Water Division and
raised matters which Mr. Marcus O’Connor, D.O.S., and Mr. Denis Holland,
Senior Engineer responded to:-

Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)
A decision was expected shortly on Irish Water Revenue Control for 2020-2024
and approval of Irish Water’s Strategic Funding Plan.

Cahir Wastewater Treatment Plant
Confirmation from Irish Water regarding budget for the design phase was
awaited.

Grangemockler Treatment Plant
It was noted that this matter was raised at a recent meeting of Carrick-on-Suir
Municipal District and a report was given to members at that meeting. There
was no further update.

Golden Wastewater Treatment Plant
The provision of a Wastewater Treatment Plant in Golden was the subject of
ongoing engagement with Irish Water and District members would be informed
of developments as they unfolded.

Group Water Schemes
It was clarified that group water schemes were entitled to annual maintenance
subsidies through the rural water programme and further details were available
from the Rural Water Section in Nenagh.
Members considered the Development Management division and raised matters which Ms. S. Kennedy, A/ D.O.S., Mr. Pat Slattery, D.O.S and Mr. B. Beck responded to:-

Protected Structures
A new county-wide Record of Protected Structures was being prepared and would form part of the County Development Plan. Over 1,000 structures had been surveyed to date as part of this review.

County Development Plan
The commencement of the preparation of the County Development Plan would commence with 26 weeks of the adoption of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and would be a two-year process. Funding had been provided for and members would be consulted during the process.

Taking in Charge of Estates
Work was continuing on the Taking in Charge of Estates. Substantial progress was made in 2019.

Brexit
The Local Enterprise Office was offering support to businesses to prepare for Brexit.

Questum, Clonmel – Phase 2
A new entrance and security system had been installed to this site and this Council was working with the I.D.A. on the future development of the site.

Property Marking Machine
It was confirmed that it was the intention to provide a Property Marking Machine to each District. This initiative arose from the Joint Policing Committee (JPC) and the first machine had been provided to the Carrick-on-Suir Municipal District.

CCTV Littleton
The operation of a CCTV system was subject to certain arrangements being agreed with the Gardai and this matter would be followed up with the Garda Commissioner.

Members considered the Development Management division and raised matters which Ms. C. Curley, D.O.S. and Marion O’Neill, SEO, responded to:-

Illegal Dumping
The Environment Section continued to be proactive in the pursuit of offenders for illegal dumping and all available methods would be used to reduce the level of illegal dumping in the County.

Recycling Centres
The provision of additional recycling centres had significant cost implications for the local authority and there were currently no plans to provide additional recycling centres.

Landfill Donohill
Plans were in place for the restoration of the landfill site at Donohill.
Household Waste Inspections
This initiative would continue in 2020.

Members considered the Development Management division and raised matters which Mr. K. Cashen, DOS, Damien Dullaghan, County Librarian, & Liam McCarthy, Head of Finance, responded to:-

Leisure Centre, Thurles
It was agreed to explore the possibility of Department Capital funding for the provision of a Kiddies Pool in Thurles Leisure Centre.

Opening Hours, Tipperary Town Library
It was confirmed that the aim to have 5 days per week with one late night opening in Tipperary Town Library was progressing. The recruitment process was well advanced on it and it was anticipated that staff would be in place early in 2020.

Rate Refunds applicable on vacant commercial properties.

Section 9 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act, 2019, provided for a revised procedure to enable local authorities to make a scheme providing for the abatement of rates in respect of vacant properties. The Section of the Act has not yet been enacted and accordingly a decision to provide for refunds on commercial properties must, in the context of the 2020 Budget, be made in compliance with Section 31 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The Act provided that, as a reserved function, the Council may specify a local electoral area (or areas) where owners of vacant premises shall be entitled to claim and receive a refund of differing proportion of the county rate and determine the proportion of the refund to apply in respect of each electoral area.

The draft budget, as presented, proposed that a graduated scheme for the application of rates refunds, based on the following table be adopted for 2020, which would yield an estimated realisable income of €150,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Rates payable</th>
<th>Rebate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than €4,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€4,000 to €7,000</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than €7,000</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An amendment was proposed by Cllr. Kennedy to the graduated scheme as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Rates payable</th>
<th>Rebate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than €5,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€5,000 to €10,000</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than €10,000</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This proposal was seconded by Cllr. Marie Murphy.

A further amendment was proposed by Cllr A. Ryan to include a fourth band to provide a 50% rebate of properties greater than €10,000 and that any monies arising would be allocated to Derelict Sites. Cllr A. Ryan’s amendment to the graduated scheme was as follows:-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Rates payable</th>
<th>Rebate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than €5,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€5,000 to €7,000</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€7,000 to €10,000</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than €10,000</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This proposal was seconded by Cllr D. Dunne.

**Adjournment of Meeting**

Following discussion, it was agreed to adjourn the meeting for a period of 5 minutes for member to consider the proposals before them.

**Resumption of Meeting**

On the resumption of the meeting it was proposed by **Cllr R. Kennedy**, seconded by **Cllr Marie Murphy** and resolved:-

That in accordance with Section 14 of the Local Government Act, 1946, as amended by Section 31 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, Tipperary County Council hereby determines that the rate of refund to apply in respect of the relevant Local Electoral Areas shall be a graduated scheme, as set out in the Table below and shall apply to eligible persons for 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Rates payable</th>
<th>Rebate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than €5,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€5,000 to €10,000</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than €10,000</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was further agreed that the application of the revised scheme above would be reviewed during the course of the year to assess its effectiveness and practical applicability.

**Adoption of Annual Budget**

Mr. Joe MacGrath, Chief Executive, advised members that as a result of the amendment to the graduated scheme for Rates Refunds on vacant commercial properties, the scheme would now realise an estimated income of €110,000. This would be €40,000 less than the figure of €150,000 contained in the Budget as presented to the members.

It was proposed by Cllr J. Ryan that any monies accrued from the Rates Refund scheme would be apportioned across the five districts and provide for new public lighting only.

The budget as presented to the members had provided that the income estimated at €150,000, realised from this scheme would allocate €100,000 to Roads and €50,000 to unfinished housing estates.

Following further consideration of the matter it was proposed by Cllr S. Hanafin and seconded by Cllr Marie Murphy and agreed that the income accrued from the Rebate Scheme would be apportioned similar to the General Municipal Allocation (GMA) and utilised for roads or public lighting purposes, resulting in the following adjustment to Table F of the Draft Budget as presented.
It will be a matter of each District to determine the exact apportionment of this increased income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Expenditure by Service and Sub service</th>
<th>Adjustment</th>
<th>Budget 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B0405</td>
<td>Local Roads General Maintenance Works</td>
<td>-100,000</td>
<td>6,609,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B0501</td>
<td>Public Lighting</td>
<td>+110,000</td>
<td>2,451,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D0701</td>
<td>Unfinished Housing Estates</td>
<td>-50,000</td>
<td>401,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H0303</td>
<td>Refunds and Irrecoverable Rates</td>
<td>+40,000</td>
<td>5,755,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summing up, the Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael Murphy referred to the further resolutions required by the Council and having regard to the amendment carried as outlined heretofore.

It was proposed by Cllr R. Kennedy, seconded by Cllr Marie Murphy and agreed:—

“That in accordance with Section 103 (7) of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by Section 58 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, and having regard to the Local Government (Financial & Audit Procedure) Regulations 2014 and the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations,

a) The Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31st December 2020 as presented and as set out in Tables A and B, as amended be and is hereby adopted, and

b) Subject to the Section 10 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions) Act 1978, determine in accordance with the Local Authority Budget as so adopted, the Annual Rate on Valuation (AVR) to be levied at €0.1919.

Cllr N. Dennehy reiterated his objection to the Budget process having regard to his request for a repeal of the Local Government Act, 2014 and the restoration of Clonmel as a Borough Council, notwithstanding the requirement of the Council to adopt a balanced budget for 2020.

It was agreed that this would be noted in the Minutes of the Meeting.

The Cathaoirleach thanked all present for their contributions and also thanked the Chief Executive and staff for their assistance in the consideration of the Draft Budget.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed/___________________________  Date/____________________
Cathaoirleach

Signed/___________________________  Date/____________________
Meetings Administrator.