

**MINUTES OF STATUTORY BUDGET MEETING HELD IN ARAS AN
CHONTAE, PORTLAOISE, ON THE 17th OF NOVEMBER 2014**

<u>PRESENT:</u>	Councillor John Joe Fennelly	In the Chair
	Councillors William Aird	Paddy Bracken
	Ben Brennan	Caroline Dwane Stanley
	Catherine Fitzgerald	Padraig Fleming
	David Goodwin	James Kelly
	John King	Jerry Lodge
	Seamus McDonald	Paschal McEvoy
	John Moran	Tom Mulhall
	Aidan Mullins	Brendan Phelan
	Mary Sweeney	Noel Tuohy

IN ATTENDANCE:

Messers Gerry Murphy, Chief Executive, Kieran Kehoe, Director of Services, Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services & Ms. Julie Bergin, A/Head of Finance.

140. BUDGET 2015

The Chief Executive referred the Members to the Draft Budget 2015 which had been prepared and circulated. He outlined the process that had been undertaken in relation to its preparation. He advised that the preparation of the draft budget had been very challenging as the task of providing the same level of service with reduced resources and cost pressures is very difficult. It will be necessary to continue to examine the sustainability of services in light of ever decreasing funding. He then referred to the information meeting held in-committee on the 13th of November 2014 when all aspects of the draft budget were discussed in great detail.

Ms. Julie Bergin, A/Head of Finance then proceeded to advise the members on a division by division basis of the Council's Expenditure & Income proposals for 2015. Reductions in payroll costs had been achieved through the management of vacancies, the non-replacement of staff, reductions in overtime pay and travel expenses and the retirement of employees. The budget included a general municipal allocation of €380k for footpaths, traffic calming, radar speed detection signs, new public lights and community projects. The tourism budget was divided between 2 divisions, tourism and festivals/events. The amount of €240k was again being provided in 2015.

The draft budget provides for revenue spending of €55,100,000 and builds on the early signs of economic growth. This is the amount required to meet the expenses and to provide for the liabilities and requirements of Laois County Council for 2015. It was noted that the annual general rate on valuation for the County is €64.63, the same as 2014 and that the ratepayers in the Town Council areas of Portlaoise and Mountmellick would see their rate bills reduced by 3% and 4% respectively.

The Members collectively and individually complemented the staff involved in the preparation of the budget. It was noted that the Council had an additional €750,000 to spend in 2015 as a result of the members not reducing the Local Property Tax by 15% at their meeting on the 22nd September 2014. A lengthy discussion took place during which all questions raised were answered. The following was agreed:-

- the introduction of the Portlaoise Business Incentive Scheme to all towns in the County from the beginning of 2015
- to examine the provision of Solid Fuel Stoves in Council rented houses
- to review the parking fees in Portlaoise for the Christmas period
- to discuss the new library at Main Street, Portlaoise with Mr. Alan Kelly, Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government
- to examine the possibility of including the rented houses in O' Moore Place & St. John's Square, Portlaoise in a future Energy Efficiency Programme
- to examine all derelict properties in our towns and villages

The Chief Executive acknowledged the concerns of the Members in relation to the housing maintenance budget and agreed to fund the installation of Carbon Monoxide Alarms at a cost of €135,000 in Council rented houses over a three year period instead of the two years originally proposed. This would result in an additional €25,000 for housing maintenance in 2015.

The adoption of the budget for 2015 was proposed by Councillor Paddy Bracken and seconded by Councillor John King.

Councillor Brendan Phelan proposed that the Council should write to Mr. Alan Kelly, Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government and request that Laois County Council be allowed to keep the full amount of the Property Tax that was raised in the County (100% v 80%). He proposed that the Council should postpone agreeing the 2015 budget for one week until a response was received from the Minister. The proposal was seconded by Councillor James Kelly.

A roll call vote was taken in relation to Councillor Phelan's proposal which resulted as follows:

PROPOSED BY:		Brendan Phelan		
SECONDED BY:		James Kelly		
MOTION				
THAT:				
<i>TO POSTPONE THE AGREEMENT OF THE 2015 BUDGET FOR ONE WEEK UNTIL A RESPONSE IS RECEIVED FROM MR. ALAN KELLY, MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITY & LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN RELATION THE COUNCIL KEEPING THE FULL AMOUNT OF THE PROPERTY TAX THAT WAS RAISED IN THE COUNTY</i>				
COUNCILLOR		FOR	AGAINST	ABSENT
FIRST NAME	SURNAME			
William	AIRD		✓	
Paddy	BRACKEN		✓	
Ben	BRENNAN		✓	
Caroline	DWANE STANLEY	✓		
John Joe	FENNELLY		✓	
Catherine	FITZGERALD		✓	
Padraig	FLEMING		✓	
David	GOODWIN		✓	
James	KELLY	✓		
John	KING		✓	
Jerry	LODGE		✓	
Seamus	MCDONALD		✓	
Paschal	MCEVOY		✓	
John Robert	MORAN		✓	
Tom	MULHALL		✓	
Aidan	MULLINS	✓		
Brendan	PHELAN	✓		
Mary	SWEENEY		✓	
Noel	TUOHY		✓	

The motion was defeated by 15 votes to 4 votes. Therefore, the adoption of the budget as proposed and seconded was unanimously agreed by the Members with no dissenting voices.

The Chief Executive thanked Ms. Julie Bergin, A/Head of Finance and all staff in the Finance and Payroll Sections for their work in the preparation of the budget. He also recorded his appreciation to the Management Team and their staff members at all levels in the Council who were involved in the process and who will be responsible for its delivery. The Chief Executive thanked the Cathaoirleach, the Corporate Policy Group & the Elected Members for their support during the year.

141. PROGRAMME OF CAPITAL WORKS FOR 2015, 2016 and 2017

The members were circulated with the indicative list of the likely capital projects to be undertaken over the next three years and this was noted.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

SIGNED: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

CERTIFIED: _____
**DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
CORPORATE AFFAIRS**