

**MINUTES OF STATUTORY BUDGET MEETING HELD IN ARAS AN CHONTAE,  
PORTLAOISE, ON THE 11<sup>TH</sup> OF NOVEMBER 2019**

<b><u>PRESENT:</u></b>	Councillor	William Aird	In the Chair
	Councillors	Conor Bergin Ben Brennan Thomasina Connell John Joe Fennelly Padraig Fleming John King Paschal McEvoy Tom Mulhall Mary Sweeney	Paddy Bracken Ollie Clooney Caroline Dwane Stanley Catherine Fitzgerald James Kelly Seamus McDonald Aisling Moran Aidan Mullins Noel Tuohy

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Messers John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance, Simon Walton, Director of Services, Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Ms. Irene Delaney, Administrative Officer & Ms. Michelle McCormack, Executive Secretary.

**172. DRAFT BUDGET 2020**

The Chief Executive, Mr. John Mulholland referred the Members to his report of November 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. He outlined the process that had been undertaken in relation to the preparation of the budget.

Mr. Mulholland indicated that over the past five years there has been a steady increase in revenue expenditure and investment into services provided by the Local Authority in County Laois. This trend is continued in 2020 and the revenue budget for members' consideration now stands at €78,742 million, an increase of €23.37 million since 2015.

Laois County Council continue to exercise prudent budgetary oversight and sound financial management over all aspects of its spending. The anticipated deficit going into 2020 will stand at approximately €50,000.

The main factors shaping the drafting of the 2020 budget are:

On the Income Side

1. Buoyancy in income from commercial rates, including rates from Irish Water yielding an additional estimated income of €651,000.
2. Retaining an increased income from the Local Property Tax, as in 2019, in the amount of €495,256.
3. An increase of €550,000 from rents on Council owned houses.
4. Increased allocations to Laois County Council under the non-national roads programme.
5. Portlaoise and the Council's application for EI Regional Enterprise Development Fund.

### On the Expenditure Side

1. The ongoing requirement to address housing maintenance matters and to meet statutory accommodation standards for rental accommodation
2. A requirement to provide matched funding to support a number of projects and initiatives including:
  - (a) The Town & Village Renewal Scheme (2019/2020)
  - (b) The Rural Regeneration Development Fund applications
  - (c) The Urban Regeneration Fund projects (Low Carbon Town and the Cultural Quarter) for Portlaoise
  - (d) The application for EI Regional Enterprise Development Fund assistance, and
  - (e) The Fáilte Ireland Tourism Destination Towns Scheme
3. The requirement to meet targets and develop actions to comply with Public Sector Energy efficiency requirements, Climate Action and Decarbonisation measures following the publication of the Climate Action Plan 2019 over the summer
4. The requirement to ensure resilience and licence updates in the Council's IT system
5. The requirement to provide improved personal protective equipment to the Fire and Emergency Services teams

It was noted that all aspects of the draft budget were discussed in great detail at the information meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2019. Mr. Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance then proceeded to advise the members on a division by division basis of the Council's Expenditure & Income proposals for 2020.

The gross revenue expenditure required to run public services in the County in 2019 is €78,472 million representing an increase of 8.9% in comparison with 2019.

The following areas of increased expenditure are of particular note:

- An increased provision of **€503,000** for maintenance and repairs to Council housing (meeting the obligations of the 2017 and 2019 Standard for Rented Housing Regulations).
- An additional sum of **€317,500** to assist in homeless services and the provision of emergency accommodation.
- An increased provision of **€201,000** to update the Council's IT network and to acquire and upgrade operating system licence agreements

- Funding of an additional **€146,000** for essential personal protective equipment and apparel for fire and emergency response crews,
- Provision of an additional **€105,000** for street cleaning and disposal of cleanings to authorized facility.
- Additional funding of **€114, 000** towards local climate action measures (Portlaoise Low Carbon Town, Lighting Replacement, Cycle and Town Bus Network planning)
- An increase of **€104,000** for local roads maintenance.
- Increased support for tourism in the County in the amount of **€62,000**.
- Provision of an additional **€60,000** in respect of the maintenance/ replacement requirements in the County's playgrounds and the provision of universal access equipment in three playgrounds
- An additional **€36,000** towards river drainage maintenance programme on the Barrow and Nore bringing the total Drainage budget for 2020 to €409,000
- A new provision of **€40,000** in respect of support for the implementation of the Community CCTV scheme in Co Laois
- An increase in the library book fund of **€25,000**.
- Provision of an additional **€22,000** in respect of cemeteries
- Provision of an additional sum of **€20,000** for the maintenance of parks and open spaces.
- Continued support for small businesses through the rates incentive scheme, paint the shops scheme and vacant property incentives.

The Members collectively and individually complemented Mr. Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance and all the staff involved in the preparation of the budget.

The Chief Executive, Head of Finance & Directors of Services responded to the various queries raised by the Members.

Councillor John King proposed the draft Budget for 2020 as presented and this proposal was seconded by Councillor John Joe Fennelly.

The Chief Executive extended his appreciation to Mr. Gerry Murphy, Head of Finance and staff in the Finance Section for their work in the preparation of the budget. He also extended his appreciation to the Directors of Services and their staff members for their commitment and hard work over the past year. The Chief Executive thanked the Cathaoirleach, Councillor Willie Aird and his predecessor, Councillor John King, the Corporate Policy Group, the Chairs of the Municipal Districts and the Elected Members for their assistance during the year.

**173. DRAFT INDICATIVE CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020-2022**

The Members were circulated with the indicative list of the likely capital projects to be undertaken over the next three years.

On the proposition of Councillor Padraig Fleming seconded by Councillor John King, the members agreed the Draft Indicative Capital Programme 2020-2022 as presented.

**198. APPROVAL OF OVERDRAFT ACCOMMODATION IN THE SUM OF €8,000,000 FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2020 TO FINANCE WORKING CAPITAL**

On the proposition of Councillor Paddy Bracken seconded by Councillor Ollie Clooney, the Members unanimously agreed to the approval of overdraft accommodation in the sum of €8,000,000 for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2020 to finance working capital.

**199. APPROVAL OF €15,000,000 FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2020 TO FACILITATE ANY TIMING ISSUES REGARDING THE PAYMENT OF PAYROLL AND PENSIONS FOR MYPAY**

On the proposition of Councillor Paschal McEvoy seconded by Councillor Tom Mulhall, the Members unanimously agreed to the approval of €15,000,000 for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 to facilitate any timing issues regarding the payment of payroll and pensions for MyPay.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**SIGNED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**CATHAOIRLEACH**

**CERTIFIED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DIRECTOR OF SERVICES  
CORPORATE AFFAIRS**