

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING OF SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON
MONDAY, 21st NOVEMBER, 2016 AT 10.00AM
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, RIVERSIDE, SLIGO.**

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

- Councillor Baker,
- Councillor Bree,
- Councillor Casserly,
- Councillor Clarke,
- Councillor Gormley,
- Councillor Healy,
- Councillor Henry,
- Councillor Keaney,
- Councillor Kilgannon,
- Councillor Lundy,
- Councillor Maguire,
- Councillor MacManus,
- Councillor MacSharry,
- Councillor Mulvey,
- Councillor Queenan,
- Councillor Taylor.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

- Mr. Ciáran Hayes, Chief Executive
- Ms. Patricia Guckian, A/Head of Finance
- Mr. Tom Kilfeather, Director of Services
- Ms. Dorothy Clarke, Director of Services
- Mr. Bartley Gavin, A/Director of Services
- Mr. John Reilly, Head of Enterprise, L.E.O.
- Mr. Tom Brennan, Senior Engineer
- Mr. Fineen O'Driscoll, A/Senior Engineer
- Mr. Joe Murphy, Senior Executive Officer
- Mr. Michael Ryan, Senior Executive Engineer
- Mr. Donal Tinney, County Librarian
- Ms. Olivia Heffernan, Acting Financial Accountant
- Ms. Orlagh Campbell, A/Administrative Officer
- Mr. Kevin Colreavy, Meeting Administrator
- Ms. Pamela Andison, Administrative Officer
- Ms. Lorraine Fitzgerald, Staff Officer
- Ms. Jo-Anne McGonigle, Assistant Staff Officer

APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from Councillor G. O'Boyle and Councillor R. O'Grady.

CATHAOIRLEACH:

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Hubert Keaney presided.

2016 DRAFT BUDGET:

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Members to the Meeting to consider the Chief Executive's Draft Budget for the local financial year ending on 31st December, 2017.

It was then **Proposed by Councillor S. Kilgannon**
Seconded by Councillor D. Mulvey

AND AGREED

"That no further motion be voted on by the Council until such time as the entire budget has been considered in detail".

Mr. C. Hayes, Chief Executive, advised the Meeting that the Budget that was being proposed for 2017 allows for the advancement of infrastructure and other projects in Sligo. Progress has been made in relation to the N4 route, the Western Distributor route, O'Connell Street Enhancement Scheme, Cranmore Regeneration and Social Housing which is now the main Government priority.

Further initiatives on stream in the coming year to be advanced include the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, REDZ proposals, reactivation of the Clár Programme and rural broadband initiatives.

The Budget had to be put in the context of the Financial Plan target of a €3.663 million surplus. The surplus being proposed is €1.6 million. The discretionary spend within the Budget next year is €2.6 million. If the €3.663 million surplus, as required in the Financial Plan is to be achieved, there would not be any funding for any of the discretionary items, e.g. Book fund, Housing maintenance and community grants. The Department had been advised, by letter, on 4th November, 2016 that the Council's Executive would be reverting to them following the Budget process.

A target of €1.6 million surplus was being aimed at for 2017. The Council is on target for €1.6 million in 2016, following a €660,000 surplus in 2015. This is a significant improvement from an annual deficit in 2008 of €2 to €3 million up to a €6 million deficit in 2013. A €1.6 million surplus is a €7.6 million improvement in our performance of 2013 and a €4 to €4.5 million swing on other years. The Budget proposed seeks to continue that progress, advance initiatives outlined above and capital infrastructure projects.

Ms. P. Guckian then outlined details from her report in the Draft Budget 2017. In particular, details were highlighted concerning

- the main changes included in the 2017 draft budget,
- Division C where most of the costs are recouped from Irish Water,
- LPT allocation 2017,
- Revised 2017 LPT Baseline to include Pension Related Deductions,
- Rates Harmonisation and
- Acute Financial matters.

GRANT THORNTON REPORT:

Proposed by Councillor D. Bree
Seconded by Councillor S. MacManus

AND AGREED

"That a copy of the Review/Report prepared by Grant Thornton consultants (referred to in Management Team Minutes of 22nd June, 5th July, 26th July, 9th August, 25th August) be issued to the members of the Council".

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DIVISION A: HOUSING AND BUILDING

Mr. B. Gavin, A/D.O.S. and Mr. J. Murphy, SEO, clarified details of queries raised by Members.

In particular, details were outlined regarding

- Developments proposed at Knappagh Road (28 Units), Rosses Point road, Collooney and Carrowbunnaun.
- Possible development in Dromore West.
- Members were advised of Council's work towards achieving a greater number of units suitable for people with a disability.
- A new initiative for 2017 will be the resettlement of residents from the international Migrant crisis with up to 20 families requiring homes in Sligo. Sligo County Council will also be expected to co-ordinate the other aspects of the resettlement, i.e. education, health care, etc.
- Grants Schemes where there is constant activity on an ongoing basis with a large need in the community for same.
- Housing inspections have reduced in recent times in order to avail of opportunities on the capital side to deliver housing.
- Cranmore Regeneration – it is hoped to strengthen that Team in 2017 and Mr. Gavin said he is hopeful of an increased investment in this area.
- Difficulties being encountered with the current Tenant Purchase Scheme were highlighted and it was noted that this Scheme is under review at present.
- The Meeting was advised that it has not been possible to maintain housing stock to a sufficient level with an average sum of €355 per home available in Sligo, compared to sums in excess of €750 in other counties.
- Other areas discussed included the H.A.P. Scheme, redevelopment of derelict properties, "Voids" being returned to housing stock.
- It was agreed that Schemes such as H.A.P. and R.A.S. together with leasing, etc. are placing more pressure on the limited resources of local authorities. This is not a partnership situation with the Department but one where a Scheme may be introduced and then funding withdrawn.
- In relation to Shared Ownership, Mr. Gavin indicated that if any Member is aware of someone experiencing difficulty with this Scheme, they should contact the Housing Section. Some individual cases have already been resolved by mortgaging the full amount involved.

Members expressed their appreciation for the work of the Staff at all levels in the Housing Section. Mr. Gavin noted this, with thanks, and in agreeing said the comments would be passed on to the Staff.

DIVISION B: ROADS, TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY

Mr. T. Kilfeather, Director of Services, advised the Meeting that in relation to capital projects, Sligo County Council is dependent on funding from the T.I.I. (Transport Infrastructure Ireland) and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

It is hoped to have notification of the Council's allocation before the end of the year or early in 2017 from the Department.

During 2016 an additional €4.5 million had been allocated to the Council's Programme, under severe weather damage funding. Mr. Kilfeather acknowledged the work of Mr. Tom Brennan, Senior Engineer and all the staff concerned for delivering the programme to a very tight deadline between April and November. Works were being finalised to draw down the funding concerned.

Mr. Kilfeather clarified details, funding figures and the current stage of various schemes/projects in the county including the Clár programme, N4, N16, N59, Eastern Garavogue bridge, O'Connell Street Enhancement Scheme.

In reply to Members' queries, the Director of Services confirmed that discussions had taken place with senior Transport Infrastructure Ireland (T.I.I.) staff and they agreed that the N17 route would be re-examined in their mid-term review.

It was noted that in relation to non-strategic schemes, no funding is available for the Burton Street link road or Markievicz footbridge where a sum of €1 million is required.

In relation to the "Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management – CFRAM", Members were reminded that the closing date for public consultation was the following day, 22nd November, 2016 and to ensure that interested parties made their submissions in time. Sligo County Council will also be raising their concerns regarding some areas around the county.

Members further discussed the following items

- lack of funding for Class III non national roads,
- the importance of the Western Distributor route for attracting jobs and investment to the county,
- the Clár programme and difficulties in understanding areas involved,
- appreciation of works carried out on junctions on the south side of Tubbercurry town,
- Funding for restoration of "Local Improvement Scheme".
- Low cost accident Scheme for works in Enniscrone village
- Public lighting in private Estates
- Work on footpaths in 2017
- Works at "Cashel Gates" on the N17, Geevagh junction and vegetation on road sides.

DIVISION C WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICES:

Members were advised of details of this Division concerning works in conjunction with Irish Water including approval for the employment of staff on their "Find and Fix" project, regulation of Water Services acting posts and capital investment at Lough Talt.

CHAIR:

As the Cathaoirleach had to leave the meeting for a short time, Councillor Dara Mulvey took the Chair at 12.10 p.m.

DIVISION C WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICES:

Members were also provided with details regarding

- Water conservation works in the Sligo city area and Killaville
- Foxes' Den upgrade, decommissioning of the Plant at Cairns Hill and resultant increased capacity,
- "Bundle" Scheme for Tubbercurry, Grange, Strandhill and Ballinafad,
- Sligo and Environs Scheme involving Ballincar, Cregg and Rosses Point,
- Ballymote, Collooney and Ballinacarrow
- Council's intention to tender for maintenance work on the schemes when they are delivered as staff have the knowledge and expertise to carry out the work,
- Minor works programme
- O'Connell Street Enhancement Scheme works,

CHAIR

Councillor H. Keaney, Cathaoirleach, resumed the Chair at 12.20 p.m.

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DIVISION C WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICES:

Members sought further clarification regarding the following Schemes:

- Upgrading of Treatment Plant in Roscommon by Irish Water (servicing many areas of south Sligo),
- Capacity at Foxes' Den Plant when Cairns Hill Plant is decommissioned,
- Closure of O'Connell Street to allow for lining of culverts,
- Payment for transfer of assets to Irish Water,

DIVISION D: DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT:

Ms. D. Clarke clarified details included under this Division, including those relating to

- Tourism development and promotion,
- Funding for the Local Enterprise Office,
- County Development Plan – it was noted that the bulk of expenditure had been incurred in 2016 with some further costs in 2017,
- Commencement of new Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan process – on completion of County Development Plan,
- Contributions to Sligo Airport, Ireland West Airport Knock and Tourism,
- European Volunteering Capital 2017,
- Work of L.C.D.C. and on L.E.C.P. and P.P.N.
- Work of Heritage Office, new Heritage Plan and work on Greenfort Conservation Plan.

In noting matters raised by Ms. Clarke, Members discussed a number of projects including:

- Greenfort funding
- "Peace" funding in light of "Brexit"

Members expressed their appreciation for the work carried out the Heritage Officer.

DIVISION E – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES:

Mr. T. Kilfeather outlined details included under this Division including those for Cemeteries in Sligo town and county and beach safety measures in the county.

ADJOURNMENT FOR LUNCH:

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 1.10 p.m. and resumed at 2.15 p.m.

DIVISION F: RECREATION AND AMENITY:

Members were advised of the detail under each heading in Group F and the slight increase in 2016 figures.

Ms. D. Clarke also clarified points in relation to:

- Community Grant Scheme proposed changes and expenditure split
- Book fund being increased from extra monies received from the area of planning

DIVISION G: AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELFARE:

Mr. T. Kilfeather informed the Members of the various aspects of expenditure under Division G, outlined the works currently planned and clarified items raised in relation to the Harbour, Foreshore Licence and coastal protection in various areas.

DIVISION H: MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES:

Ms. P. Guckian advised the Members regarding Miscellaneous Services and clarified queries raised in relation to the decrease in bad debt provision

There was a detailed discussion regarding the requirement to harmonise rates and the obligation on the Council to do same. The Members adjourned until 3.45 p.m. to discuss the matter.

The meeting recommenced at 4.05 p.m with further discussion on this item.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, PLANNING, COMMUNITY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADDITIONAL FUNDING:

Proposed by Councillor D. Bree
Seconded by Councillor S. MacManus

AND AGREED

"That Sligo County Council noting the provision of the additional bailout funding of €1 million from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, and further noting the loss in income to the Council arising from the revaluation of global utilities and the withdrawal of the subvention for recycling facilities; requests the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government to substantially increase the annual bailout subvention to the Council".

COMMERCIAL RATES:

Proposed by Councillor M. Gormley and Councillor P. Taylor
Seconded by Councillor M. Clarke, Councillor M. Baker, Councillor M. Casserly and Councillor J. Queenan

"That there be no increase in commercial rates outside the former Borough Council area, i.e. the rural areas of County Sligo"

A vote was called on the resolution which resulted as follows:

FOR: Councillor Baker, Councillor Casserly, Councillor Clarke, Councillor Gormley, Councillor Queenan and Councillor Taylor (6)

AGAINST: Councillor Henry, Councillor Keaney, Councillor Kilgannon, Councillor Lundy, Councillor Maguire, Councillor MacSharry and Councillor Mulvey (7)

ABSTAINED: Councillor Bree, Councillor Healy and Councillor MacManus (3)

The Cathaoirleach deemed the motion lost.

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AMENDMENT IN EXPENDITURE RE LIBRARY BOOK FUND/PLANNING FEES:

**Proposed by Councillor D. Bree
Seconded by Councillor S. MacManus**

"That expenditure under heading FO204 Purchase of books etc. be increased by €58,000; and the income under heading Table F Division D Planning Fees be increased by €58,000".

Motion was amended and re-presented by Councillor Bree as follows:

**Proposed by Councillor D. Bree
Seconded by Councillor S. MacManus**

AND AGREED

"That all income under the heading Planning fees (Table F) above €194,000 be allocated to the Library book fund".

RATES HARMONISATION:

**Proposed by Councillor S. Kilgannon
Seconded by Councillor H. Keane**

AND AGREED

"Sligo County Council agrees to achieve rates harmonisation over eight years and not over five years as proposed in the 2017 Draft Budget Plan".

ROADS ALLOCATION FOR COUNCILLORS:

**Proposed by Councillor S. Kilgannon
Seconded by Councillor T. MacSharry**

AND AGREED

"That the Roads Allocation for each Councillor be increased to €10,000 each. This total, amounting to €18,000 is to be taken from General Maintenance – B04".

CATHAOIRLEACH OF BALLYMOTE-TOBERCURRY MUNICIPAL DISTRICT ALLOWANCE:

**Proposed by Councillor P. Taylor
Seconded by Councillor M. Baker**

AND AGREED

"That the allowance for the Cathaoirleach of the Ballymote-Tobercurry Municipal District be fixed at €6,000 per annum with effect from the 1st January, 2017. This allowance is to be paid monthly in arrears to cover reasonable expenses incurred by the Cathaoirleach within the Municipal District".

MAYOR OF SLIGO MUNICIPAL DISTRICT ALLOWANCE:

**Proposed by Councillor T. MacSharry
Seconded by Councillor S. Kilgannon**

AND AGREED

"That the allowance for the Mayor of the Sligo Municipal District be fixed at €12,000 per annum with effect from the 1st January, 2017. This allowance is to be paid monthly in arrears to cover reasonable expenses incurred by the Mayor within the Municipal District".

CATHAOIRLEACH'S ALLOWANCE:

**Proposed by Councillor K. Henry
Seconded by Councillor D. Mulvey**

AND AGREED

"That the allowance for the Cathaoirleach be fixed at €20,000 per annum with effect from the 1st January, 2017. This allowance is to be paid monthly in arrears to cover reasonable expenses incurred by the Cathaoirleach within County Sligo".

LEAS-CATHAOIRLEACH'S ALLOWANCE:

**Proposed by Councillor S. Kilgannon
Seconded by Councillor T. MacSharry**

AND AGREED

"That the allowance for the Leas Cathaoirleach be fixed at €4,000 per annum with effect from the 1st January, 2017. This allowance is to be paid monthly in arrears to cover reasonable expenses incurred by the Leas Cathaoirleach within County Sligo".

TRAINING ALLOWANCE:

**Proposed by Councillor S. Kilgannon
Seconded by Councillor T. MacSharry**

AND AGREED

"That the training allocation for each member be increased by €500 – H09. This total, amounting to €9,000 is to be taken from Matched Funding – F0404".

TOWN TWINNING FUND:

**Proposed by Councillor S. Kilgannon
Seconded by Councillor T. MacSharry**

AND AGREED

"That the Town Twinning fund of €7,500 be increased by €2,500 to €10,000. This €2,500 to be taken from Matched Funding – F0404".

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ADOPTION OF BUDGET:

Having considered the Draft Budget the Cathaoirleach requested that a motion be placed before the Members;

Therefore it was

**Proposed by Councillor S. Kilgannon
Seconded by Councillor H. Keaney**

"That Sligo County Council hereby adopts the Budget for the local financial year ending on the 31st December, 2017 as submitted by the Chief Executive Officer and as amended at this Meeting".

For: Councillor Baker, Councillor Casserly, Councillor Henry, Councillor Keaney, Councillor Kilgannon, Councillor Lundy, Councillor Maguire, Councillor MacSharry, Councillor Mulvey and Councillor Taylor (10)

Against: Councillor Bree, Councillor Clarke, Councillor Gormley, Councillor Healy and Councillor MacManus (5)

The Cathaoirleach declared the motion carried.

RATEABLE VALUATION:

**Proposed by Councillor S. Kilgannon
Seconded by Councillor H. Keaney**

"That Sligo County Council hereby adopt, for the financial year ended 31st December, 2017, the Budget set out in Tables A and B as amended at this meeting, resulting in an Annual Rate in Valuation of €66.95 as shown in Table A and subject to Section 10 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions) Act, 1978 having regard to the Base Year Adjustment, as set out in Table C, as amended, and determined in accordance with Section 29 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014".

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT:

**Proposed by Councillor M. Baker
Seconded by Councillor S. Kilgannon**

AND AGREED

"To note the Chief Executive's Report on the proposed three year Capital Programme 2017-2019 (pages 108 and 109 of Budget Book)".

VOTES OF SYMPATHY:

**Proposed by Councillor M. Gormley
Seconded by Councillor D. Bree**

AND AGREED

"That a vote of sympathy be extended to Alfie and Laurence Quigley of Collooney on the death of their mother, Josephine.

**Proposed by Councillor M. Gormley
Seconded by Councillor D. Bree**

AND AGREED

"That a vote of sympathy be extended to Mrs. Mullarkey and family of Castlerock, Aclare on the death of her husband, Alf.

**Proposed by Councillor M. Gormley
Seconded by Councillor D. Bree**

AND AGREED

"That a vote of sympathy be extended to Amanda Lundy (Sligo County Council Staff member) in Tubbercurry Motor Tax Office on the death of her brother, James Walsh.

**Proposed by Councillor M. Gormley
Seconded by Councillor D. Bree**

AND AGREED

"That a vote of sympathy be extended to Moira Durcan and family of Carrentubber, Tubbercurry on the death of her husband, Gerry.

END OF MEETING:

The Chief Executive thanked the Members, Ms. Guckian and all of the staff who worked on this Budget commenting that it is not an easy task in the current climate.

Councillor Baker congratulated the Cathaoirleach on doing a very good job and thanked Ms. P. Guckian and the staff in the Finance Section.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the staff for their work in preparing the budget and commended the members for their input and consideration of the 2017 Budget.

The meeting concluded at 4.35 p.m.