

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE AN GAILLIMHE
MINUTES OF STATUTORY BUDGET MEETING FOR GALWAY COUNTY
COUNCIL HELD AT ARAS AN CHONTAE, PROSPECT HILL, GALWAY ON FRIDAY 27TH
NOVEMBER 2015 AT 11.00 AM

I LATHAR:

CATHAOIRLEACH:

Cllr. Peter Roche
Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway

BAILL:

Cllrs. Broderick, J. Byrne, N. Byrne, Canney, Charity, D. Connolly, M. Connolly, Comh. O’Cualáin, Cllrs. Cuddy, Cunniffe, Comh. O’Curraoin, Donnellan, Donohue, Fahy, Feeney, G. Finnerty, M. Finnerty, Healy, Hoade, Hynes, Joyce, Kearney, Keaveney, Killilea, Kinane, Maher, Mannion, McClearn, K. McHugh, T. McHugh, Noone, Rabbitte, Thomas, Comh. Ó Tuairisg, Cllrs. Walsh & Welby.

OIFIGIUGH:

Mr. Kevin Kelly, Chief Executive, Mr. G. Mullarkey, Head of Finance, Messrs. J. Cullen, L. Gavin, P. Gavican Directors of Service, Ms. C. Mc Connell A/Director of Service, Mr M. Owens, County Secretary & Meetings Administrator, Mr. M. McGovern, Management Accountant, Mr. S Groarke, Administrative Officer, An tUas. P. O’Neachtain, Oifigeach Gaeilge.

Thosnaigh an cruinniú leis an paidir.

The Cathaoirleach Cllr. Peter Roche welcomed the elected members, officials and the press to the Statutory 2016 Budget Meeting and requested that all matters discussed should be done so in a constructive way which pertained to the adoption of the Draft Budget for 2016.

RESOLUTIONS OF SYMPATHY

2099

Cllr. G. Finnerty conveyed a vote of sympathy with Ms. Caroline Quinn and her family on the death of her uncle Mr. John Coleman. Cllr. Fahy concurred with the expression of sympathy with the Quinn family and expressed sincere sympathy to Mrs. Christina Taylor on the death of her husband Sam who was the local postmaster in Ardrahan. The Cathaoirleach expressed a vote of sympathy to the Whyte family in Ballinastack on the death of their son Eugene. Cllr. Canney expressed a vote of sympathy to the family of Mr.

Tom O'Donohue, the former Law Agent of Galway County Council. Comh. O'Curraoin expressed sympathy on the death of Mr. Joey Mahony, the former Cork hurler who also played for Liam Mellows Hurling Club.

A resolution of sympathy was also extended to the following:

- Cóil Flaherty, Baile Láir, Beál An Daingean, Leitir Móir, Co. na Gaillimhe
- Margaret Bn Uí Cheannabháin, Coill Sáile, Cill Chiaráin, Co. na Gaillimhe
- Brid Bn Uí Ghríofa, Scribe, Rosmuc, Co. na Gaillimhe.

Cllr. Donohue congratulated Sarsfields Hurling Club on winning the County Final last Sunday. He acknowledged the major benefits gained by having clubs such as Sarsfields and the GAA active within the local community. Cllr. J. Byrne also acknowledged the important role undertaken by the GAA in the community and complimented Sarsfields and wished Abbeyknockmoy the best of luck in the Intermediate Final. Comh. O'Curraoin also expressed congratulations to Sarsfields on winning the Seniors, Clarinbridge in regard to the Minors and to Abbeyknockmoy for the recent result in London.

Cllr. Maher complimented everyone associated with organising the official launch of the 1916 Centenary Programme for the County of Galway held on the 16th November in Aras an Chontae. Comh. O'Tuairisg concurred with this and stated that it was a great start to the 1916-2016 Centenary Commemorations and he complimented the organisers for the way it was presented and welcomed that fact that there was a great attendance on the night.

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF BUDGET FOR YEAR 2016

2100

The Cathaoirleach then advised that the first item on the Agenda was the consideration and adoption of the Budget for 2016 and he requested the Chief Executive to introduce the Draft Budget.

Mr. Kelly referred to the changing times which were particularly evident in the figures being presented- the Revenue Budget for 2008 was €160m compared to €104m for 2016, the Capital Budget was €300m in 2008 compared to €30m in 2016 and the number of staff declined from 1,350 to less than 1,000 which represented a 742 whole time equivalent. He advised of the significant difficulties in framing a balanced budget and in the delivery of services. He referred to the fact that the annual rate on valuation €66.59 has remained unchanged since 2009 and the Local Government Reform Act 2014 made statutory provision for the bridging of any gap between the County rate and the rate which applied to any former Town Council. He referred to the methodology of the Base Year Adjustment and the required merging of the 2 rates over a period of time not to exceed 10 years. He advised that the Council cannot raise the County Rate during this period of adjustment and given the fact that it has been 7 years since the last increase – the retention of this position for a further extended period is unsustainable. He stated that this was highlighted in the budgetary process and in the budget report last year and was also discussed with the Corporate Policy Group on a number of occasions. He advised that the 2016 Budget includes a base year adjustment for the Ballinasloe Town rate and that the rate being proposed for the County (excluding Ballinasloe) is €66.59 while the

rate for Ballinasloe will increase from €52.00 to €55.00 which represents an increase of 6% and which is equivalent to the rate which applied to the County in 2004. This represents an average increase of €2 per week for ratepayers in Ballinasloe. He stated that the decision made by the elected members to retain the same level of Local Property Tax as 2015, has maintained the amount of income from that source but with little or no revenue buoyancy in other areas despite some new valuations-a significant reduction in the global valuation of utilities together with significant more non-discretionary costs in 2016 has resulted in a very constrained budget for 2016. He referred to the additional non-discretionary costs listed on page 3 of his report.

He advised of the reduced income from commercial rates due to the revised global valuation and that the Council had received an €573,000 allocation from the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government to offset the loss. He stated that the budget was largely consistent with 2015 and that many of the changes arise as a result of the re-apportionment of staff costs between service areas –what may seem to be a significant change in some service areas is actually due to the movement of staff. He informed the members that the formulation of the 2016 draft budget commenced with the 2015 budget figures, the provision required for additional expenditure and the need to reduce expenditure in other areas- in order to achieve a balanced budget. This involved the assessment and allocation of all non-discretionary expenditure, prioritising projects and implementing the required reductions. He referred to the reductions which involved €400,000 in regard to Road Maintenance, €100,000 in regard to the potential loss of income in regard to the decision on free parking and €50,000 for grants (€25,000 Community and €25,000 Economic grants) He was concerned that adequate budget provision was not possible in areas such as Road Maintenance, Public Lighting, Economic Development and Housing Maintenance. He referred to the Auditor's reference to the current deficit balance and the lack of scope to reduce it. He stated his concern on the inadequacy of the budget provision for Economic Development –given the fact that the Council would require sufficient funding to underpin its enhanced role – he referred to projects such as the European City of Culture 2020 bid, development of the Tourism Strategy and the agreement with Teagasc and Scull Enterprises to progress the development of a food hub at the Teagasc Campus in Athenry. He advised that careful monitoring will be required in 2016 by all Council units to maintain expenditure within budget headings and if there was a requirement to spend that was not envisaged –it would have to result in a reduction in some other area. He highlighted the fact that there was no provision for any contingencies such as severe weather or other unexpected incidents which may arise in 2016.

He thanked the elected members for their cooperation and support during 2015 and expressed his appreciation to the Cathaoirleach Cllr. Peter Roche and the former Cathaoirleach Cllr. Mary Hoade for their commitment to the special responsibilities of their office and their courtesy and cooperation in carrying out the business of the Council. He also acknowledged the role and assistance of the Corporate Policy Group in regard to the draft Budget. He expressed his appreciation to the staff of the Council for their dedication and flexibility in recent years which ensured the continued delivery of services in difficult circumstances. He thanked the Directors of Service and their staff for the rigorous examination of budget headings for 2016 to identify areas for efficiency

improvement and cost savings. In particular, Mr. Kelly acknowledged the work of Mr. Ger Mullarkey, Mr. Michael McGovern, Ms. Caitriona Lusby, Ms. Bernadette O'Connor and the staff in the Finance unit and thanked all involved in delivering the draft budget. He then recommended to the elected members the adoption of the Draft Budget 2016.

Cllr. Cuddy requested a short adjournment to allow the members an opportunity to review the document which was presented to them before the meeting commenced.

In response, Mr. Kelly informed the meeting that the details on the page presented was already included within the Draft Budget but a printing error resulted in 2 lines of text missing from the page in the copy received by the members- which related to the rate of valuation and as there was no change proposed to this in 2016 –there was nothing new being presented on the document issued to them.

Cllr. Welby requested the Chief Executive to clarify the loss of rate income to the Council due to the global revaluation of utilities, whether the Department has informed it of the compensation for the loss, where it is planned to use this funding and why the members had not been informed of the additional funding.

In response, Mr. Kelly advised that the additional funding of €573,000 was not included in the draft Budget but as he had indicated earlier the budgets for Road Maintenance, Economic Development, Public Lighting & Housing Maintenance had been reduced in order to achieve a balanced budget and he suggested that the additional funding could be restored to these headings.

Cllr. D. Connolly enquired as to why the proposed increase in the rate for Ballinasloe was not brought before the members of the Municipal District who had therefore no input into the process. He also stated that the budget for the Municipal District of Ballinasloe was down by €400,000.

In response, Mr. Kelly advised that it was not brought before the Municipal District as it was a decision for Plenary Council and it was discussed at the CPG meetings and he felt that the period of 10 years was too long for the base rate adjustment and that the proposed increase of 6% was not excessive and is appropriate to commence the process.

Cllr. Canney enquired as to the net amount of the loss to the Council as a result of the revision of the valuation of the utilities and the net cost of the proposed decision to allow for free parking in the towns.

Cllr. Welby advised that both he and Cllr. Cuddy as members of the CPG were not advised of the additional funding allocated by the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government to partially address the shortfall in funding arising from the revision of global valuations on utilities.

Cllr. McClearn advised that representations were made to the Minister which resulted in the €573,000 additional allocation to offset the loss as he recognised the difficult position

faced by the Council which is now more manageable. He stated that he is in a position to make a proposal with Cllr. Hoade as to how to distribute the additional funding.

Cllr. Broderick stated that the actual loss was €750,000 and while the compensation of €573,000 was welcome, it still resulted in a overall shortfall of €177,000. He enquired whether the Draft Budget allowed for the impact of the proposed decision on the free parking and whether the Council is facing a reduction of €677,000 from last year. He advised that the details of the rate increase for Ballinasloe should have been presented to the Municipal District.

Cllr. Fahy proposed that the €573,000 additional funding be divided among each Municipal District so that they can allocate it appropriate to the requirements of their areas.

Cllr. Thomas stated that he did not want to be associated with the thanks expressed to the Minister as the Council is still left with a lower budget and referred to his requests at previous meetings for a commitment to deal with the major problem of blocked gullies on the roads through the County, where money is spent on interim fixes when in fact cost savings can be achieved by implementing a proper system.

Cllr. Cunniffe requested information on the outstanding rate arrears figure, the age profile of the debt, the policy of the Council in regard to its collection and the provision for bad debts in the Budget.

In response Mr. Mullarkey stated that the amount of uncollected rates as of December 2014 stood at approximately €10m and the bad debt provision in the 2016 Draft Budget amounted to €4 m.

Cllr. M. Finnerty advised that he opposed the rate increase for Ballinasloe, indicating it was not the right year to increase it as businesses were already stretched. He complimented the Chief Executive for his foresight in purchasing the site for the new library in Ballinasloe and the €4.1m investment, stating that it is a fine library. He queried the €70,000 provision for E0103 in regard to the landfill and requested confirmation in regard to the fund with a balance of €17m. He also enquired if Mr. Gavin could implement a more cost effective system as regards Public Lighting.

Comh. O'Cualáin stated that there was a net shortfall of €177,000 in the Budget as a result of the global revaluation of the utilities and that there was a major lack of funding for roads.

Cllr. J. Byrne welcomed the additional allocation of €573,000 from the LG Fund and advised that his colleagues had lobbied the TDs. He stated that the decision on the revaluation of the utilities was made by the Valuation Office. He welcomed the additional allocation of €1.6m for regional and local roads allocated in July 2015. He advised that the Council should increase the funding allocation for community grants and highlighted the important work done by volunteers in their communities.

Cllr. Healy referred to his discussion with Mr. Gavin in regard to the Public Lighting system and advised that the Council should seek support in regard to retro-fitting lighting which was more energy efficient system and would reduce costs. He advised that this entailed additional capital costs which will have to be incurred in order to implement it. He also enquired if the Council was deriving more income from the rateable valuation on wind turbines and sought confirmation as to when the Councillors were informed of the €573,000 extra allocation.

Cllr. Kinane welcomed the additional funding and advised that there was just 5 playgrounds in the Athenry-Oranmore area and advised that the Council should seek funding from the Department of Children to help kick start the "Lets Play" Programme.

Cllr. Cunniffe referred to the fact the rates arrears debt was increasing each year which is a major problem and not sustainable in the long term. He advised that the Council was using figures for rates income each year which were not realistic. He said he spoke to the Head of Finance about the matter and requested details of the age profile of the debt and the bad debts provision. He referred to the fact that if the Council could not collect arrears of rates from certain businesses during the past few years and it appears that it would never be in a position to collect it and therefore the Council is making provision for spending money which it does not have.

Cllr. Broderick stated that in his opinion the Council should be run as a business. It is ignoring a debt that is going out of control and would not be in existence now if it was a private company. He advised that it was vital that everyone understood that carrying bad debts of €4 m each year was not sustainable.

In response, Mr. Kelly advised that in regard to the pay parking query the Road Maintenance budget was reduced by €100,000 to allow for a proposal in relation to pay parking but that this item was effectively a contra item with the outcome of any proposal for pay parking impacting on the funding available for local roads. In regard to the valuation decrease-he advised that the global valuation on the E.S.B was initially increased in 2014 but it was then subsequently decreased following an appeal which resulted in a combined reduction of income of €750,000 –but in reality it was more like €515,000. He explained that he did not seek a meeting with the CPG following the announcement of the €573,000 compensation because there was a clear indication of the areas where the money was taken from in order to balance the budget and it was evident that the extra funding could be allocated to these areas- ultimately it was up to the members to decide. He confirmed that the Council received notification of the €573,000 compensation late last Friday and noted the omission to distribute the details of this to the members. He confirmed that the Council was receiving an increase in rates income due to the valuation of wind turbines by the Valuation Office.

In regard to the landfill-he advised that the funding on page 137 included in the Budget refers to costs associated with the old landfills located around the county. He advised that the Poolboy Landfill is operated out of the Capital Account with an operation cost of approx €400,000. He stated that figures in regard to the operation of the landfill were previously outlined to the Council and it was necessary to be compliant with licences

which entailed costs and the residual funding was allocated to other areas such as the Town Enhancement works, Ballinasloe Library and the Relief Road. He noted that the allocation of this funding, as determined by the former Ballinasloe Town Council, was previously outlined to the members.

Mr. Kelly advised that the issue concerning the arrears of rates and bad debts was a significant one. He stated that the Auditor has just completed the 2014 Audit and he was broadly satisfied. The arrears figure for rates is €10m with a bad debt provision of €4m. He advised that if the Council wishes to increase the bad debt provision, then it would have to reduce expenditure by a corresponding amount somewhere else in the budget. He advised that the Auditor's Report on the Annual Financial Statement for 2014 would subsequently be brought before the Council.

Mr. Gavin advised that the budget of €1.2m for Public Lighting was to fund the operation and maintenance of same with additional capital costs for upgrading and refitting works. He explained that there would be a major capital cost associated with replacing the existing 13,000 public lights with a more energy efficient system –before any cost savings can be derived. He confirmed that the Council was implementing a number of small schemes in this regard.

Cllr. McClearn referred to the work done by the Fine Gael and Fianna Fail Councillors in regard to the making of representations to the Minister- following the notification of the revaluation of the utilities and thankfully the representations were acknowledged by the Minister with the allocation of the extra funding of €573,000. He stated that it was difficult to get a balanced budget and certain areas required more funding and it was the prerogative of the Councillors to make proposals for extra funding. He advised that Cllr. Hoade and himself would make a proposal to amend the Budget with regard to the distribution of the €573,000 extra funding.

It was proposed by Cllr. McClearn, seconded by Cllr Hoade *that extra funding be allocated as follows:*

<i>Code A0101</i>	<i>Maintenance of LA Housing Units</i>	<i>€21,000</i>
<i>Code A0902</i>	<i>DPG Grants</i>	<i>€50,000</i>
<i>Code C0401</i>	<i>Operation & Maintenance Public Conveniences</i>	<i>€7,000</i>
<i>Code E0601</i>	<i>Operation of Street Cleaning Service</i>	<i>€30,000</i>
<i>Code F0204</i>	<i>Purchase of Books</i>	<i>€25,000</i>
<i>Code FO401</i>	<i>Community Grants</i>	<i>€35,554</i>

It was proposed by Cllr. Hoade, seconded by Cllr. McClearn *that the balance of the extra funding be allocated as follows: :*

<i>Code B0405</i>	<i>Local Road General Maintenance Works</i>	<i>€300,000</i>
<i>Code B0501</i>	<i>Public Lighting Operating Costs</i>	<i>€40,000</i>
<i>Code D0905</i>	<i>Economic Development & Promotion</i>	<i>€40,000</i>
<i>Code E0901</i>	<i>Maintenance of Burial Grounds</i>	<i>€20,000</i>
<i>Code F0303</i>	<i>Beaches</i>	<i>€5,000</i>

The Cathaoirleach requested Mr. Owens to proceed with a vote on the proposals.

A vote was taken on the proposal by Cllr. McClearn, seconded by Cllr Hoade. The outcome of the vote was as follows:

FOR:

Cllr. Aidan Donohue	Cllr. Anne Rabbitte	Cllr. Donagh Killilea	Cllr. Eileen Mannion
Cllr. Frank Kearney	Cllr. Gerry Finnerty	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn	Cllr. Joe Byrne
Cllr. Karey McHugh	Cllr. Martina Kinane	Cllr. Mary Hoade	Cllr. Ml. Connolly
Cllr. Michael Fahy	Cllr. Michael Finnerty	Cllr. Michael Maher	Cllr. Niamh Byrne
Cllr. Noel Thomas	Cllr. Peter Roche	Cllr. Pat Hynes	Cllr. Seamus Walsh
Cllr. Peter Feeney	Cllr. Shane Donnellan	Cllr. Tom McHugh	Comh. S.O'Cualáin
Comh. T. O'Curraoin	Comh. S. O'Tuairisg		

[26]

AGAINST:

Cllr. Dermot Connolly	Cllr. James Charity	Cllr. Jim Cuddy	Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe
Cllr. Thomas Welby	Cllr. Tim Broderick	Cllr. Tom Healy.	

[7]

ABSTAIN:

Cllr. Des Joyce	Cllr. Sean Canney
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[2]

The Cathaoirleach declared the motion carried.

A vote was taken on the proposal by Cllr. Hoade, seconded by Cllr. McClearn. The outcome of the vote was as follows:

FOR:

Cllr. Aidan Donohue	Cllr. Anne Rabbitte	Cllr. Donagh Killilea	Cllr. Eileen Mannion
Cllr. Frank Kearney	Cllr. Gerry Finnerty	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn	Cllr. Joe Byrne
Cllr. Karey McHugh	Cllr. Martina Kinane	Cllr. Mary Hoade	Cllr. Ml. Connolly
Cllr. Michael Fahy	Cllr. Michael Finnerty	Cllr. Michael Maher	Cllr. Niamh Byrne
Cllr. Noel Thomas	Cllr. Peter Roche	Cllr. Pat Hynes	Cllr. Seamus Walsh
Cllr. Peter Feeney	Cllr. Shane Donnellan	Cllr. Tom McHugh	Comh. S.O'Cualáin
Comh. S. O'Tuairisg			

[25]

AGAINST:

Cllr. Dermot Connolly Cllr. James Charity Cllr. Jim Cuddy Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe
Cllr. Thomas Welby Cllr. Tim Broderick Cllr. Tom Healy.

[7]

ABSTAIN:

Cllr. Des Joyce Cllr. Sean Canney Comh. T. O'Curraoin

[3]

The Cathaoirleach declared the motion carried.

Cllr. Charity expressed his concern that the Cathaoirleach had allowed a vote on the motions without permitting debate on the issues. He enquired about an announcement that some staff from Sligo County Council were to transfer to Galway due to the financial difficulties associated with the Lissadell case and whether this was taken into consideration in the draft Budget. He also stated that the €20,000 provided for Burial Ground Maintenance would not solve the problem of lack of space and in his view was a drop in the ocean. Cllr. Hoade clarified that the proposal referenced for Burial Ground Maintenance was for the purpose of providing extensions to Burial Grounds and not for maintenance purposes.

Cllr. Cuddy stated his opinion that the vote on the motions was premature without discussion on the relevant facts. He advised that the indicative budget for the Municipal Councils was €28m but the allocation to the Athenry-Oranmore MD was only 8.7% of this -even though it contained 20% of the population. He stated that this matter should be reviewed and adjusted accordingly. He enquired if the Council will be compensated for the increased costs associated with the Lansdowne Road Agreement. In regard to the budget for public lighting -he advised that energy costs have been reducing. In regard to the Galway Airport site-he enquired how much interest had been paid on the loan since the Council in conjunction with the City Council purchased the site and whether it was purchased as "vacant possession" and how much was received from the lease. He enquired about the amount paid to the Council by the Galway Flying Club since the purchase of the site and the use of the money. He expressed his concern in relation to reports that assets on the site for sale on Done Deal and if this was the case-these assets had been paid for out of taxpayers money. He questioned the exposure of the Council in regard to the N6-Galway Outer By-Pass Project given the fact that most of the route is within the city boundary and why staff have been assigned to the project when there is a need for them in the County. He noted the fact that there was no provision for contingencies such as bad weather in the Budget. He questioned as to how the Council can be run in light of the substantial decreases in funding -with the Budget decreasing

from €160m in 2008 to €104m now, Road Grants decreasing from €39.9m in 2008 to €18m now and the decrease in funding from the LG Fund from €46m to €29m. In regard to the provision for Water Services- he questioned as to why Irish Water was not funding this. He stated that there was no expectation of any increase in funding from the L.P.T and that there was a total lack of funding for roads- the budget is not acceptable as the Council is left in a weak, dysfunctional and unsustainable state.

Cllr. J. Byrne stated that he finds it hard to reconcile the fact that Cllr. Cuddy voted against the allocation of the extra funding and then states that the Council needs more funding. He advised that the Council should continue with the existing lease for the site at Carnmore Airport for at least another 11 months.

Mr. Kelly responded to the comments made in regard to the Carnmore Airport site by confirming that prior to the purchase of the site by the 2 Councils, a private company had purchased the equipment on the site, so if there were any assets sold being sold on Done Deal they did not belong to the Councils. He advised that as part of the lease agreement it was agreed that the Council would pay €105,000 p.a to the leasees. He added that in recent discussions with the leasees, the Council indicated that it would be interested in entering another short term lease with them on a break-even basis i.e it was not the intention of the Council to have to subsidise the arrangement. This may not be feasible in regard to the current leasees and it was never the intention of the Council when purchasing the site to have to subsidise it. He informed the meeting that the process is ongoing with discussions with several interested parties and we have to await the outcome.

Cllr. M. Connolly welcomed the extra funding of €573,000 but stated that it was not sufficient to deal with the real problem which is the lack of funding for county and tertiary roads, the problem of road maintenance is not being addressed. He added that there are people residing in peripheral areas of County Galway who pay their taxes and their roads are neglected. He stated that the L.P.T was supposed to fund local services and the Council is not getting the funding it requires to maintain the road network, it was left to the elected member to increase the L.P.T. He raised his concern in regard to the increase in the rate for Ballinasloe as it would likely result in business closures. He advised that rate debtors should be identified and assessed as those that cannot pay and those that will not pay. He suggested that the Council should implement free parking in the towns for the full month of December as per previous years.

Cllr. G. Finnerty welcomed the increased allocation and expressed an opinion that roadworks should commence at the beginning of the year when the funding is allocated and not towards the end and welcome the approach of the Council in providing a framework for such works in the County of Galway in the form of the annual Roads Programme. He stated that major issue facing the Council in regard to arrears of rates, bad debts and write off is a result of the downturn and it is not easy to collect. He indicated that he is aware that the Council adopts a flexible approach with businesses and would not question the Auditor's report. In regard to the Flood Relief/Mitigation details listed on page 108-he indicated that he would prefer to see South Galway prioritised as a separate entity.

Cllr. Healy referenced the timelines associated with the budgetary process and the notification of the additional allocation of funding. He indicated that the absence of prior notice to the full Council, of the additional allocation of funding from the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government, following issue of the budget proposal, placed some of the Members at a disadvantage, in not being afforded the opportunity to consider the allocation of the additional funding prior to the meeting.

Cllr. D . Connolly expressed the opinion that there is a huge deficiency in what is required to run the Council and the available funding, resulting in services that cannot be provided. He stated that the Municipal District of Ballinasloe had a deficit of €400,000 in funding from last year. In regard to the Flood Mitigation measures listed on page 21- he requested a breakdown of the details especially in regard to the River Suck and Shannon. He enquired if there was a deficit of €125,000 as regards the funding of parks and open spaces in regard to Ballinasloe. He requested an update in regard to the proposed extension required for the Fire Station at Ballinasloe. In regard to the Capital Assistance Scheme, he requested details in regard to how the Council can deliver the house building and house purchase schemes. He stated his opinion that it was the wrong year to apply the rate increase of 6 % for Ballinasloe. He enquired as to the intended future use of the former Library building in Ballinasloe.

Mr. Gavican advised that the Council has to await approval from the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government in regard to capital works Ballinasloe Fire Station, explained the various social housing provisions and indicated that the future use of the former Library building was under consideration.

Comh. O'Tuairisg welcomed the provision for an allocation for the Galway Mountain Rescue in the increased allocated for Community Grants. He stated that the Council should express a vote of no confidence in the Valuation Office in regard to its decision to reduce the valuation on the utilities as they have a regular income and that other local authorities be requested to support the Council on this issue.

Cllr. Maher advised that the Council should maintain the free parking charges for Christmas as referenced at the November meeting of Plenary Council.

Cllr. Broderick referred to the shortfall of €400,000 in the budget for the Municipal District of Ballinasloe and queried the position in regard to the allocation for parks and open spaces for 2016.

He requested details on the % of rates collected during the past 5 years and advised that a fair and equitable rates system was required as the Council is aware that some rates cannot be collected. He referred to a trial revaluation assessment undertaken by the Vintners Association which produced 17 downward and 36 upward valuations. He advised that more funding was required for burial grounds at E0901.

Cllr. E. Mannion welcomed the €573,000 extra funding and the €10,000 proposed funding for the Galway Mountain Rescue Service. She also welcomed the fact that the Fire Station in An Cheathrú Rua would become operational in 2016, the benefit of the Wild Atlantic

Way initiative and its Discovery Points, the new Wastewater Treatment facility for Clifden, the Clúid Housing initiative for Clifden and Letterfrack and the development of the carpark in Cleggan.

Cllr. Rabbitte expressed disappointment that the N65 was not listed on the Capital Program and that Portumna and Ballinasloe were excluded from the flood relief measures in regard to the River Shannon. She requested that the Council go back to central Government in regard to this and other funding requirements. She complimented Ms. Marie Mannion in regard to heritage projects undertaken during 2015.

Cllr. Canney stated that the additional funding is not reality but political and there is an actual loss to the Budget. He advised that the Council would have to forward plan in regard to the implication of the revaluation of the utilities. He stated that the rates arrears issue would need to be addressed and that there should be a rebate for those who pay their rates. He enquired as to how the free parking issue was being addressed and what was proposed in regard to the Christmas parking.

Cllr. Kinane referenced the important role of the Roads, Transportation & Marine Strategic Policy Committee in changing the model for the allocation of roads funding from being based solely on the length of road to a model that gives due consideration to other criteria including traffic volumes. She requested support from her colleagues in the Municipal District of Athenry-Oranmore to advance and necessary policy change.

Comh. O'Curraoin criticised the lack of funding for roads and other services and stated that the 20% of the LPT kept in Dublin should be allocated to the Council as well as the proceeds of motor tax that is collected from motorists in the County.

Cllr. Donohue advised that the rate for Ballinasloe be maintained without the 6% increase in order to help businesses as the increase would only make a bad situation worse. He congratulated Seamus Duffy in regard to the volunteer of the year awards.

It was proposed by Cllr. Donohue and seconded by Cllr. M. Finnerty *'not to charge the rates in the Ballinasloe Town from the existing rate of €52.00'*.

It was proposed by Cllr. Cunniffe, seconded by Cllr. K. McHugh and Cllr. Killilea *'that a sum of €25,000 euro be set aside for a feasibility study on the introduction of a traffic free cycling and walking trail known as a Greenway alongside or on the disused railway linke in County Galway. This €25,000 would be the seed funding for development of Greenways. The money would be a re-allocation of all of Cllr. Cunniffe's NOM for 2016 and the balance from Cllr. Karey's allocation'*.

Mr. Gavin responded by stating that the Council has to examine the proper mechanism to fund the greenway project and would need to consult with central Government in regard to the feasibility study.

Mr. Kelly advised that the NOM allocation was an inherent part of the Roads Programme and that it was vital that it be kept for road maintenance and should not be moved

around in an ad hoc way. He advised that he had no knowledge as regards the movement of Sligo County Council staff. In regard to the global valuation of utilities –he advised that the ESB valuation was increased a year ago and was subsequently reduced during the year following an appeal –there is still an increase on last year with an overall loss of €512,000.

Comh. O’Cualáin stated that when the cost of Public Lighting, Piers & Health and Safety is deducted from the €18.5m Roads Budget- it leaves a balance of €15m for the roads which is totally inadequate. He advised that Waterford which is a small county had a roads budget of €14.4 m in 2014- but he could not confirm if this included extra funding for specific reasons. He stated that every motorist pays approx €5,000 p.a when motor tax and vat on petrol, tyres and vehicle maintenance is taken into account. He stated that the level of road maintenance was a disgrace which the Councillors need to do something about as more funding is required from the Government.

Cllr. Hynes stated that with 1,000 applicants on the Housing waiting list –more funding is required to address this issue. He advised that the HAP scheme may go some distance in regard to the provision of accomodation for those approved for social housing. He noted that there was no increase in the roads budget and stated that funding was needed for hedge trimming. He stated that the shortfall of €107,000 in the budget would need to be addressed.

The Chief Executive indicated that the proposal for free parking at Christmas needed to be a measured and balanced proposal. He advised that the gap in regard to the Ballinasloe rate needs to be bridged and while there is never a good time to do it- the process has to commence. He advised that the allocation for the Municipal Districts was the same as 2015. He stated that provision was made in the budget in regard to the loss of potential pay parking income of €100,000 and that the impact of any final proposal would be reflected as a contra item against local roads. He advised that the rates issue was an integral part of this budget process and that it was not a matter within the remit of the Municipal Districts. He stated that the Auditor’s Report and AFS will be on the Agenda in January 2016.

Cllr. K. McHugh again queried if Councillors could use their NOM money for the greenway feasibility study as they was to use their initiative to progress it-they were not receiving any funding from other sources and the NRA was doing the Dublin-Galway Greenway project.

Cllr. Feeney advised that the M6 Galway Outer Bypass was required to solve the traffic problem as it can take over 2 hours to cross the City. He stated that the rates system was not fit for purpose and badly required reform. He stated that the funding for NOM was taxpayers money and is part of the budget for road maintenance.

Cllr. M. Finnerty referred to the €70,000 allocation for E0103 Landfill Aftercare Costs on page 137 and enquired whether it can be reduced to provide more funding to D0905 Economic Development in regard to Ballinasloe. He also enquired if the ratepayers in Ballinasloe would have to pay €95,000 extra in 2016.

Mr. Kelly advised that code E0103 did not relate to the Poolboy Landfill- it referred to historic old landfills in other parts of the County and that no part of the funding for economic development was ringfenced a particular location.

Following consideration of the motion as proposed by Cllr. Cunniffe in relation to the re-allocation of NOM funding for a feasibility study on the Greenway, a request from Cllr. Cunniffe to withdraw the motion, in order to submit a revised motion, was agreed.

Cllr. Cunniffe stated that the Greenway incorporates cycling which fits in with transportation and as Tuam has no cycleway -he expressed his opinion that the Council should provide €25,000 for the feasibility study. He referred to the funding in Tourism Promotion of €200,000 at D0501.

Cllr. McClearn advised that it was Council policy to promote projects. He stated that there was a need to clarify exactly what the motion in regard to the Ballinasloe rate means and that it has to be brought in line with the rest of the County. He stated that even when times were good the Council had increased rates and water charges.

Cllr. Rabbitte requested Liam Gavin to provide an update on the N65 and funding for flood relief measures .

Mr. Gavin responded by advising that the N65 will have to be funded by a capital allocation from the NRA and the Council has to await the announcement of the Road Grants in late January 2016 which will then form part of the Roads Programme which will be presented to the Municipal Districts and the Council. He advised that submissions have been made to the OPW in regard to the flooding which have to be analysed and that the OPW was examining the report on the Shannon CFRAMS. He confirmed that the Council's own local catchment funding has been provided for the River Suck in the budget as per last year.

It was proposed by Cllr. D. Connolly, seconded by Cllr. Healy and agreed to allow Cllr. D. Connolly to *allocate €1,000 to the Galway Sheep Breeders Society from his Conference/Training Allowance.*

A proposal from Cllr. Donohue to withdraw his motion not to charge the rates in the Ballinasloe Town from the existing rate of €52.00 was agreed.

Cllr. Broderick requested an adjournment of the meeting for 5 minutes to allow the Members of the Municipal District of Ballinasloe time to consider the proposed rates increase for town of Ballinasloe and to identify the savings necessary in the amount of €95,000 to allow the rate be retained as per 2015. The Cathaoirleach indicated his intention to proceed with the meeting on the basis that a majority of the Members would not favour an adjournment.

It was proposed by Cllr. McClearn, seconded by Cllr. Hoade to consider and adopt the draft Budget for 2016 with the agreed amendments, and for the motion to be put

without further debate. In response to a request from Cllr. Broderick for clarification, Mr. Owens advised that as it had been proposed to proceed with the motion without further debate, if a majority of the Members present agreed to put the motion, no further debate on the motion was allowable. He confirmed that if a majority of the Members present were not in favour the motion being put without further debate, then it was open to the Members to continue the debate and propose amendments.

The Cathaoirleach requested the motion proceed to a vote and the sign in process for the vote was commenced.

It was proposed by Cllr. Broderick, seconded by Cllr. D. Connolly '*an adjournment for 5 minutes to find €95,000 that the Ballinasloe urban rate is retained the same as 2015 rate*'.

The Cathaoirleach ruled that as there was no agreement and the motion was submitted following the calling for and commencement of the vote, he ruled it was not in order, the meeting was to continue and the vote proceed without further debate.

The result of the vote was as follows:

FOR:

Cllr. Aidan Donohue	Cllr. Anne Rabbitte	Cllr. Donagh Killilea	Cllr. Eileen Mannion
Cllr. Frank Kearney	Cllr. Gerry Finnerty	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn	Cllr. Joe Byrne
Cllr. Martina Kinane	Cllr. Mary Hoade	Cllr. Ml. Connolly	Cllr. Michael Fahy
Cllr. Michael Finnerty	Cllr. Michael Maher	Cllr. Niamh Byrne	Cllr. Noel Thomas
Cllr. Peter Roche	Cllr. Peter Keaveney	Cllr. Seamus Walsh	Cllr. Peter Feeney
Cllr. Shane Donnellan	Cllr. Tom McHugh	Comh. S. O'Tuairisg	

[23]

AGAINST:

Cllr. Dermot Connolly Cllr. Tom Healy Comh. Seosamh O'Cualáin Comh. T. O'Curraoin

[4]

ABSTAIN:

[0]

NON-VOTING:

Cllr. Des Joyce	Cllr. James Charity	Cllr. Jim Cuddy	Cllr. Karey McHugh
Cllr. Seán Canney	Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe	Cllr. Thomas Welby	Cllr. Tim Broderick

[8]

DETERMINATION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BUDGET ADOPTED, OF THE RATE ON VALUATION TO BE LEVIED FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 2016 2101

It was proposed by Cllr. McClearn, seconded by Cllr. Hoade and agreed to determine, in accordance with the Budget adopted, the rate of valuation to be levied for the financial year ending 31-12-2016.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE ESTIMATED OUTTURNS 2015 2102

It was proposed by Cllr. McClearn, seconded by Cllr. Hoade and agreed to adopt the estimated outturns for 2015.

TO NOTE THE REPORT ON THE THREE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2103

It was proposed by Cllr. McClearn, seconded by Cllr. Hoade and agreed that the Report on the 3 year Capital Programme be noted.

TO NOTE THE ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT ON THE GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2015 -2019 IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 134 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED) 2104

It was proposed by Cllr. M. Connolly, seconded by Cllr. Finnerty and agreed that the Council provides free parking as regards its carparks throughout Co. Galway from 11a.m each day for the whole month of December 2015.

Mr. Gavin stated his opinion that the free parking should be restricted to Christmas week from Monday the 21st to Saturday the 26th as it was not sustainable for the whole month. He advised that in previous years some people left their vehicles parked for most of the day and denied access to other shoppers.

It was proposed by Cllr. O'Tuairisg, seconded by Cllr. Maher and agreed *'that Galway County Council express its dissatisfaction with the Rates Assessment Office on its decision in reducing the rates for utility companies. This has resulted in a reduction in scarce Council funding and its adverse effect on the provision of services. I therefore propose a vote of confidence in the Assessment Office'*.

It was proposed by Cllr. Cuddy, seconded by Comh. O'Cualáin *'that the NOM allocation for each member be increased to €25,000 so that they can have realistic discretion as to how to deal with the many demands being made on them for road improvement works and that the increased NOM allocation would come out of the roads budget allocation.'*

Mr. Gavin advised that the roads budget was very limited and therefore there was no flexibility as regards more demands and he did not consider deductions from same to be an effective use of money.

Cllr. McClearn advised that the matter should be referred to the SPC for consideration when the Roads Programme is being formulated.

Mr. Kelly recommended that the matter be brought before the SPC for consideration as the implications of what is delivered by the NOM funding and what its effective use needs to be discussed.

Cllr. Thomas enquired if the Discretionary Maintenance Grant would be affected by the proposal regarding the NOM.

Cllr. M. Connolly advised of the importance of the NOM money in regard to works like making junctions safer and implementing road drainage as there was no will to do this kind of work.

Cllr. Hoade stated that she had discussed increasing the NOM with Mr. Gavin and its effect on the Discretionary Maintenance Grant.

Mr. Gavin confirmed that he discussed the matter with Cllr. Hoade and recommended that it be brought before the SPC and then the full Council when the Roads Programme is on the Agenda.

Cllr. Cuddy stated that the NOM is a budget matter and does not have to go to the SPC. He advised that he would not withdraw his motion.

An amendment to the motion as proposed by Cllr. Cuddy, seconded by Comh. O’Cualain was proposed by Cllr. M. Connolly, seconded by Cllr. McClearn *‘that the proposed increase in the Councillors’ NOM allocation be referred back to the SPC and be included as a supplementary item on the Agenda for the next week’s Roads SPC meeting.’*

The Cathaoirleach requested a vote be taken on the amendment as proposed by Cllr. M. Connolly, seconded by Cllr. McClearn. The result of the votes was as follows:

Vote Result: Approval Present- 33 Yes-21 No-12 Abstain-0 No-Voting-0

FOR:

Cllr. Aidan Donohue	Cllr. Anne Rabbitte	Cllr. Donagh Killilea	Cllr. Eileen Mannion
Cllr. Frank Kearney	Cllr. Gerry Finnerty	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn	Cllr. Joe Byrne
Cllr. Mary Hoade	Cllr. Ml. Connolly	Cllr. Michael Fahy	Cllr. Ml. Finnerty
Cllr. Michael Maher	Cllr. Niamh Byrne	Cllr. Noel Thomas	Cllr. Peter Feeney
Cllr. Peter Keaveney	Cllr. Peter Roche	Cllr. Shane Donnellan	Cllr. Tom McHugh
Comh. S. O’Tuairisg			

[21]

AGAINST:

Cllr. Dermot Connolly Cllr. James Charity Cllr. Jim Cuddy Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe
Cllr. Thomas Welby Cllr. Tim Broderick Cllr. Tom Healy. Cllr. Des Joyce
Cllr. Karey McHugh Cllr. Sean Canney Comh. S.O’Cualain Comh. O’Curraoin

[12]

It was proposed by Cllr. Cunniffe, seconded by Cllr. K. McHugh & Cllr. Killilea *‘that a sum of €25,000 be set aside for a feasibility study on the introduction of a traffic free cycling and walking trail known as a Greenway alongside or on the disused railway line in County Galway. This €25,000 would be the seed funding to attract the Capital funding for development of Greenways. The money would be allocated from D0301 Tourism Promotion’.*

Mr. Kelly advised that the budget for D0301 covered Tourism Promotion salaries and operational expenses with a number of ongoing projects in accordance with the development strategy. He stated that it is a small budget and the Council has to work with other agencies in regard to the promotion of tourism.

As the motion was not agreed, the Cathaoirleach called for a vote. The outcome of the vote was as follows:

FOR:

Cllr. Anne Rabbitte Cllr. James Charity Cllr. Jim Cuddy Cllr. Shaun Cunniffe
Cllr. Thomas Welby Cllr. Tim Broderick Cllr. Donagh Killilea Cllr. Michael Fahy
Cllr. Karey McHugh Comh. S.O’Cualain Comh. O’Curraoin

[11]

AGAINST:

Cllr. Aidan Donohue Cllr. Dermot Connolly Cllr. Des Joyce Cllr. Eileen Mannion
Cllr. Frank Kearney Cllr. Gerry Finnerty Cllr. Jimmy McClearn Cllr. Joe Byrne
Cllr. Mary Hoade Cllr. Ml. Connolly Cllr. Ml. Finnerty Cllr. Michael Maher
Cllr. Niamh Byrne Cllr. Peter Feeney Cllr. Peter Keaveney Cllr. Peter Roche
Cllr. Shane Donnellan Cllr. Tom McHugh Cllr. Seán Canney Cllr. Tom Healy

[20]

ABSTAIN:

Cllr. Noel Thomas Comh. Seosamh O’Cualáin

[2]

It was proposed by Cllr. Byrne, seconded by Cllr. Walsh and agreed *'that Galway County Council endeavour to continue the usage of Carnmore Airport beyond the date of 15-12-2015 for a minimum period of 11 months which includes extending the existing lease arrangements with Carnmore Aviation Ltd'.*

It was proposed by Cllr. Kinane, seconded by Cllr. M.Connolly and agreed *'that Galway County Council would seek funding from the Department of Youth and Children to kick start the "Lets Play" Programme.'*

It was proposed by Cllr. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. M. Connolly and agreed *'that Galway County Council would send a message to the French Ambassador in Dublin in sympathy with the French people –on their terrible loss of life on Friday 13-11-2015 and that we condemn the innocent loss of life'.*

Comh. O' Cualáin complimented the organisers of Scoil Samhraidh an Phiarsaigh in Ros Muc and advised that the community was very happy with the event.

Cllr. Cuddy was joined by Comh. O'Cualain and the Members in conveying best wishes to Cllr. Thomas's father on his participation in the National Lottery Programme Winning Streak.

The Cathaoirleach thanked everybody for attending the meeting and complimented the Galway 2020 Team and the support given by the Chief Executive for being shortlisted for the next phase of the European Capital of Culture. He then declared the meeting closed.

CHRIOCHNAIGH AN CRUINIÚ ANSIN