

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE**

**GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Ceantar Bardasach Bhaile Átha an Rí**

**Municipal District of Athenry**

**Minutes of the Budget Meeting of the Municipal District of Athenry held in Aras an Chontae, on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2023.**

**I LATHAIR:**

BAILL: Cllr. J. Charity (Cathaoirleach)  
Cllr. J. Cuddy,  
Cllr. S. Herterich Quinn  
Cllr. A. Dolan  
Cllr G. Cronnelly  
Cllr. D. Collins  
Cllr. L. Carroll

OIFIGIGH: Ms. K. O'Connor, Head of Finance  
Ms A. Fenton, Financial Accountant  
Mr D. Pender A/ DoS, Infrastructure, Operations, Fire & Emergency Manage  
Mr A. Farrell, A/DoS, Community & Rural Development & Corporate Services  
Ms R. Lowe, Senior Engineer,  
Mr. S. Whelan, Senior Executive Engineer  
Ms. M. Jordan, Administrative Officer  
Ms. M. Duddy, Senior Staff Officer

The Cathaoirleach congratulated Cllr Cronnelly on winning silver and bronze medals for rowing at the Rowing for Paris Paralympic Games 2024 held at Armida Rowing Club in Torino on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of October, 2023.

The Members congratulated the Cathaoirleach on the birth of his new baby girl.

**To consider & adopt (with or without amendment) under Section 58 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 a Draft Budgetary Plan for the Municipal District of Athenry, as prepared under the direction of the Chief Executive.**

The Head of Finance outlined the Draft Budgetary Plan for the Athenry Municipal District for 2024 which has an indicative expenditure of €5,067,024 an increase on last year's expenditure which was €3,896,265. She highlighted the increase in the Local Property Tax allocation for Galway County Council from €14.5m to €20.3m and said that she has taken

into account the decision made by the Members at the Council meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023 not to vary the local property tax rate. The allocation includes the €5,009,789 equalisation funding in order to ensure that the allocation is at least matched to the baseline.

The Head of Finance outlined the budgetary process and explained that the process is made more difficult as the full budgetary information is not yet available. There is currently a deficit of €8.5m. There are a number of significant items that have not yet been determined including whether or at what level there will be Government financial support for Local Authorities in 2024, the level of provision for bad debts, and increased vacancy rates in commercial properties due to the Reval 2023, the impact that will be felt in other areas of income that may reduce as a result of any decrease in economic activity or increase in the rate of unemployment.

She said that as in prior years we are still finalising the Councils Budget for 2024 and the estimation of expenditure and income are as accurate as they can be at this point in the process. Galway County Council funding is non-discretionary in nature and in the absence of a general municipal allocation to each area there is little or no scope to recommend amendments at MD level.

The indicative figures for Athenry MD reflect an increase in roads grant funding received in 2023. The actual road grant allocations won't be notified until the end of January or mid-February of next year and will be reflected in the roads programme as part of the schedule of Municipal District works brought before Members early in the new year.

The members made the following comments.

- The budget is challenging for Galway County Council annually.
- The Members welcomed the increase in funding for Athenry MD.
- Community grants figure does not reflect the amount of money that is spent in the area e.g. Funding for the Macnas parade in Athenry was not included in last year's estimate.

The Executive provided the following responses to queries raised.

- The funding can be transferred between codes D and E but if you take from one of these then it will leave a shortfall in another area.
- Total Indicative Expenditure for parks and open spaces relates to commitments to parks such as Renville Park.
- There are no civic amenity sites in the Athenry MD area.
- The burial grounds are estimated on the overall figures across the five MDs.
- More funding will be available for Community Grants when applications are received during the year.
- The casual trading funding in the total indicative column of €85,000 relates to the Ballinasloe fair.

- If there are issues in relation to the operation of graveyards, they can be forwarded to the executive.

Cllr Dolan said that he wanted to put forward a proposal to take €60,000 from the code B0302 and create a new code for a salary for a technician in the Athenry area. Mr Pender clarified that the roads funding of €1,192,066 was department funding and could not be used to fund the salary of a technician for the Athenry MD area. Mr Farrell said that the strategic workforce plan aims to strengthen outdoor and indoor staff numbers. He said that the suggestions raised on staff for the Athenry office would be taken on board and it would be generally accepted that staffing needs to be increased in the Athenry/Oranmore area. Mr Pender advised that staff may be available when General Operatives return to GCC from Uisce Eireann. Cllr Dolan withdrew his proposal.

Cllr Cronnelly said that he proposed not to accept the budget. There was no seconder for this proposal.

The Cathaoirleach said that he was in support of the budget.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr Carroll, SECONDED by Cllr Collins the members agreed to adopt without amendments, under Section 58 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 , a Draft Budgetary Plan for the Municipal District of Athenry, as prepared under the direction of the Chief Executive.

#### CRIODHNAIGH AN CRUINNUI ANSIN

Approved by:

James O'Byrne  
CATHAOIRLEACH

Date: 30/1/2024

