

**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 the Council Chamber Aras an Chontae, on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2021.**

I LATHAIR:

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

OIFIGIGH: Mr G. Mullarkey, Director of Service  
Mr M. McGovern, Management Accountant  
Ms. M. Jordan, Administrative Officer.  
Ms D. Hansberry, Clerical Officer.

**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.** AMD96

Mr Mullarkey presented the budget for 2022 for the Athenry Municipal District to the members. He noted that the income for 2022 will be the same as 2021 but that there are additional demands on expenditure with regard to pay agreements and other statutory costs. He said that work is continuing on preparing the draft budget for the Plenary Meeting scheduled for the 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 and noted that there was currently a shortfall of approximately €4.5M between the expenditure submissions made by the directors and the available income.

Cllr Collins thanked the Finance staff for their work involved for the Athenry Budget 2022 noting that the Council is seriously underfunded. He noted that this municipal district has the highest population of citizens and the most trafficked road network in the county. The issue was raised of the constituency not being represented fairly as it only received 10% of the municipal district budget even though the Athenry municipal district represented 20% of the population of the county.

It was highlighted that the biggest issue was the funding for roads as it was based on KMS and not on the population of the MD. He noted that the budget was similar to the 2021 budget with only a €6,000 increase in spending. He noted that he could not support the draft budget.

- Cllr. L. Carroll supported the rejection of the budget and queried how the current deficit of €4.5M would be funded. He agreed that the constituency was not being represented fairly in terms of funding.
- Cllr G. Cronnelly queried if Galway County Council had any plans to implement a vacant site levy. Cllr G. Cronnelly agreed that the Athenry municipal district was both underfunded and understaffed. He also stated that he could not support the draft budget.
- Cllr. J. Cuddy also queried how the Athenry municipal district received 10% of budgeted expenditure but had 20% of its population. He suggested that the basis of the roads related budgets should be calculated on a volume of traffic rather than the current per Km basis. He referred to a funding imbalance versus other local authorities and that he could not support the draft Budget.
- Cllr. J. Charity supported the rejection of the draft budget. He noted that the level of funding is inadequate and its division by municipal district was not equitable. He queried if there was "Brinkmanship" between Central Government and the Council.
- Cllr. A. Dolan also queried how the current deficit of €4.5M was to be funded. He suggested that Central Government need to be challenged as to the underfunding in Galway County Council.
- Cllr. S. Herterich Quinn also had the same concerns as her Colleagues re underfunding and the under-resourcing of Galway County Council.

Mr. Mullarkey agreed that the Council is underfunded and that the executive continued to make representations to the Department to address this issue. He noted that with the exception of one year local property tax had not been varied and that the last increase in commercial rates was in 2009. Mr. Mullarkey noted that the presentation on a proposed model for funding local Authorities presented to the council members at a recent meeting had been forwarded to Government.

In response to a number of queries by the members he explained that the current deficit of €4.5m was the gap between the director's estimate of the level of expenditure needed and the available income. He explained that in order to present a balanced budget at the plenary meeting would result in the additional request for funding not being met.

Mr. Mullarkey noted that the vacant site levy needs to be adopted into the County Development Plan firstly.

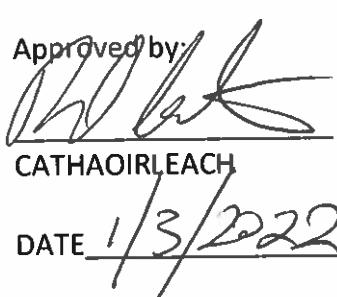
In reply to a query on the budget not being passed by the Council members at the Plenary meeting Mr. Mullarkey explained that if the Plenary Budget is not passed within the prescribed time period the Minister may under the legislation dissolve the Council and appoint a commissioner to carry out the reserved functions.

It has long been argued by councilors that this Local Authority receives far less funding per capita than other counties and services are starting to crumble.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr Cronnelly & SECONDED by Cllr Charity it was agreed to reject the Draft Budgetary Plan for the Municipal District of Athenry as prepared under the direction of the Chief Executive. This was unanimously agreed.

Criochnaigh an Cruinniu ansin.

Approved by:



CATHAOIRLEACH

DATE 1/3/2022.

