

Minutes of the Municipal District of Loughrea budget meeting held
on 24th October 2019

**MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF LOUGHREA
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PROSPECT HILL,
GALWAY**

ON THURSDAY 24TH OCTOBER 2019 AT 2.30 PM

I LÁTHAIR:

BAILL:

Cllr Joe Byrne

Cllr Ivan Canning

Cllr Shane Curley

Cllr Geraldine Donoghue

Cllr Pat Hynes

Cllr Martina Kinane

Cllr Michael "Moegie" Maher

Cllr Jimmy Mc Clearn

OIFIGIGH:

Mr Ger Mullarkey, Head of Finance

Mr Jim Cullen, Director of Services, Infrastructure & Operations

Mr Gerard Haugh, Senior Executive Engineer, Municipal District of Loughrea

Mr Páraic Carroll, Administrative Officer, Planning Environment & Emergency Services

Ms Sinéad Ryan, Clerical Officer, Finance Department

APOLOGIES:

Cllr Gerry Finnerty

Cllr P. J Murphy

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

Cllr Hynes welcomed everyone to the meeting where the draft budget for the Municipal District of Loughrea 2020 is to be discussed. The draft budget report was distributed for review and Cllr Hynes invited Mr. Mullarkey to give a presentation on the main changes to the 2020 Budget from that adopted in 2019.

Mr. Mullarkey outlined the procedure to new members as being a three-stage process whereby the statutory budget would be decided by 25th November. He told the attendees that the main change to the 2020 draft budget was €3.5 million which reflected increases in roads grant funding. Mr. Mullarkey stated that the road grants budgets were based on 2019 but that the increase reflected was due to the boundary changes in the electoral area in 2019.

A general discussion then commenced. Cllr Moegie Maher welcomed the allocated budget for the maintenance of burial grounds but stated that he was dissatisfied with the indicative expenditure for the Maintenance of Traveler Accommodation Units as a substantial amount is being spent on these units on a yearly basis but the units were ultimately being decimated year after year. He also expressed his dissatisfaction at the cost of operating the public toilet in Loughrea town at €30K per annum. He stated that as there are multiple toilet facilities in the swimming area, that this amount (€30K) would be best allocated elsewhere.

Cllr Martina Kinane stated that she felt €9 million was not a sufficient budget given the boundary changes in 2019. She questioned what percentage of the budget would be allocated to Loughrea and subsequently to Gort, Kinvara etc. She expressed her dissatisfaction at the €79K budget for Road Winter Maintenance and questioned whether the €12,500 allocated to Recreational Development included any reference to Renville Park.

Cllr Joe Byrne stated that he had an issue with the 2020 budget not reflecting the new boundaries. Ger Mullarkey stated that he clarified at the start of the meeting that the 2020 budget had taken this into consideration. Cllr Byrne requested an extra €5K be made available to open the toilet facilities at Trácht Beach a month earlier for the month of May.

Cllr Ivan Canning stated that the roads were so bad in East Galway that the majority of the roads budget would be eaten up there. He said he had his concerns that some allocations had decreased given the change in boundaries.

Cllr Shane Curley advised that he had sent an email to GCC two weeks prior to the meeting looking for clarification on the spending in each area. He questioned the percentage of the Co. Galway road network is in Loughrea M.D. He stated that he was advised the answers would be available to him at the budget meeting and that he was not happy to adopt the budget given that he felt there is no clarity on road distance, number of burial grounds or number of open park spaces in the new area.

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Cllr Geraldine Donoghue requested an increase on the already allocated €95K for the Maintenance of Burial Grounds stating that there was huge work to be done on boundary walls in some burial grounds that she had witnessed herself and that a lot of work in burial grounds was being done on a voluntary basis by members of the public. Páraic Carroll advised that the €95K was broken down as follows: Maintenance Allowances €15K, Caretaker's Fees €50K and Grant's Committees approx. €30K. Cllr Donoghue suggested the validity of a community scheme in order to carry out the repairs at burial grounds.

Cllr Jimmy McClearn stated that there was a huge deficit in information at the meeting stating that he had requested the number of KM's of road in the new M.D area and still did not know what to tell people regarding the road's budget. He also expressed his concern at the fact that there are now 7 extra burial grounds in the Kiltormer area alone and yet the budget had only increased by €8K and that wasn't accounting for any other area.

Mr. Jim Cullen advised that figures are indicative of previous year's spending and based on the length of roadway in each area and the index survey on the conditions of the road network. He stated figures would become more apparent with the receipt of road's grants but there was also a standing resolution that any additional monies received would be spent within a 20KM distance of Galway City. Mr. Cullen stated that the facilities at Trácht Beach would not be open any earlier in 2020 and that there would be no adjustment made to the budget in relation to same.

Cllr Joe Byrne stated that there was no clarification relating to the minimal increase of only €4K being made available to Regional Road Winter Maintenance and requested that €5K be omitted from the Operation of Street Cleaning Services and instead allocated to Trácht Beach facilities.

Cllr Martina Kinane advised that taking money from one sub service to facilitate another is not helpful as there are huge issues in parts of the M.D in relation to street cleaning which she would deem a safety issue if not dealt with.

Cllr Canning questioned if it would cost an extra €5K per annum to keep the toilets at Trácht Beach operational for an extra month. He said he would back the proposal if the toilet facilities at Portumna Swimming Area were also included in the proposal. Cllr Kinane requested that the toilet facilities at Renville Park also be included. Cllr Moegie Maher requested that facilities at Loughrea Swimming Area also be taken into consideration.

Cllr Maher again expressed his frustration at the amount spent on Traveler Accommodation Units and Estate Maintenance. Mr. Ger Mullarkey stated that there are 727 Local Authority houses in the Loughrea M. D area and that there was no figure available for Traveler Specific Accommodation. Cllr Pat Hynes asked Cllr Maher if he he wished to take €20K from the Maintenance of L.A Housing Units budget to open toilets for an extra month? Cllr Maher confirmed that the proposal was to open these facilities for an extra month in Trácht, Portumna, Loughrea and Renville Park. Cllr Jimmy McClearn said that he was not in favour of reducing

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the budget for the Maintenance of Traveler Accommodation Units as it had already been reduced by €7K since last year and that the number of units will most definitely have increased due to the boundary changes.

Cllr Shane Curley again questioned the number of KM's of road network in Loughrea M.D. Ger Mullarkey confirmed that of the 6.904 KM's of road network in the County, 1.970 of these are in the Loughrea M. D area. He also stated that money was needed to maintain CCTV operations in litter control. Mr. Páraic Carroll confirmed that CCTV figures were included in the Litter Control Initiative.

Cllr Martina Kinane questioned if any funding was made available for the maintenance of piers. Jim Cullen advised that there is a small county wide budget available for piers which is not divided between the M.Ds.

Cllr Shane Curley requested that an adjournment be made or conditions be placed on the adoption as he felt there was a fair lack of clarity in the proposed budget. Cllr Joe Byrne advised that discussions had been satisfactorily dealt with and that any changes going forward could be amended. He wanted it stated on record that a facility be put in place to open the Trácht Beach facilities one month earlier in 2020. Cllr Ivan Canning agreed and stated that proposal should include Portumna, Loughrea and Renville. Mr. Jim Cullen advised that there were some very clear questions to be addressed and that it was perfectly legitimate to ask questions but it was not practical to drill down each figure.

Cllr Pat Hynes read the proposal written by Cllr Shane Curley and seconded by Cllr Martina Kinane as follows: 'That pre-budget adoption be adjourned until a detailed breakdown is available of each sub service and how the money is spent'. Cllr Hynes asked for a show of hands in relation to the said proposal – all those in favour – Cllr Curley, Cllr Canning, Cllr Kinane. All those against – Cllr Donoghue, Cllr Maher, Cllr McClearn, Cllr Byrne, Cllr Hynes. Motion not carried.

Adoption of Draft Budgetary Plan 2020:

For: Cllr Geraldine Donoghue	Against: Cllr Shane Curley
Cllr Moegie Maher	Cllr Ivan Canning
Cllr Jimmy McClearn	Cllr Martina Kinane
Cllr Joe Byrne	
Cllr Pat Hynes	

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CRÍOCHNAIGH AN CRUINNIÚ ANSIN.

Approved by:

Pat Hynes

Cllr Pat Hynes

Cathaoirleach

Municipal District of Loughrea

11/11/2019