



# Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

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## Cork County Council

**Minutes of Proceedings at Annual Budget Meeting of Cork County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Cork and by Microsoft Teams on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 11.00am.**

### **I LATHAIR**

#### **Comhairleoir Dónal Ó Coileáin, Méara Chontae**

**Comhairleoirí:** Uí Chochláin G, Ó Colmáin, Ó Murchú C, Ó Suilleabháin S, Uí Shuilleabháin M, Ó Donnabháin, Ó Coileáin, Ó Murchú PG, Ní Chroinín, Ó Conaill, Mac Craith, Uí Daltún, Ó Muircheartaigh, Uí Bhuachalla, De Faoite S, Daltún Ó Suilleabháin, Ní Cheallacháin, Barra, Sheppard, Rasmussen, Ó Conchubair S, Ó Conchubair A, MacCarthaigh N, Ó Flionn, Uí Bhriain, Ó Laoghaire, Dawson, De Róiste, Ó Muineacháin, Ó Dubhghaill, Ó Sé SP, Ó Murchú G, Críod, Ó Muineacháin G, Ó Luanaigh, Ó Cochláin M, Uí Loinsigh, Ó Luasa, Ó Haodha Padraig, Ó Murchú Gearóid, Ó Cinnéide, Ó Madaoin, Ó Sé T, Léineacháin Uí Foghlú, Ó hÉalaithe, Ó Héigheartaigh, Uí Thuama, MacCarthaigh S, Mac Uaid, Ní Cheallaigh, Ó Cearbhaill, Ó Muirthile, Uí Chaochlaioich.

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor Danny Collins, County Mayor, presided.**

**Councillor:** Coughlan, Coleman, Murphy K, O'Sullivan J, O'Sullivan M, O'Donovan, Murphy PG, Cronin, O'Connell, McGrath, D'Alton, Murtagh, Buckley A, White J, Dalton-O'Sullivan, O'Callaghan, Barry, Sheppard, Rasmussen, O'Connor S, O'Connor A, McCarthy N, O'Flynn, O'Brien, O'Leary, Dawson, Roche, Moynihan B, Doyle O'Shea JP, Murphy G, Creed, Moynihan G, Looney, Coughlan M, Lynch, Lucey, Hayes Pat, Murphy Gearóid, Kennedy, Madden, O'Shea T, Linehan-Foley, Healy, Hegarty M, Ahern, Twomey, McCarthy S, Quaide, Kelly, Carroll, Hurley, Coakley.

Chief Executive, Head of Finance, Senior Executive Officer, Management Accountant.

### **[b] VOTES OF SYMPATHY**

**TO:** Councillor Paul Hayes on the death of his father Michael Hayes

**TO:** Noel O'Grady on the death of his mother Anne O'Grady

**TO:** Sinead Ring on the death of her father Michael Cremin

- 1. TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT BUDGET PREPARED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE SHOWING THE AMOUNTS, WHICH IN HIS OPINION, WILL BE NECESSARY TO MEET THE EXPENSES AND PROVIDE FOR THE LIABILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE COUNCIL DURING THE LOCAL FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2023.**

The Chief Executive said he would be presenting the Annual Revenue Budget for 2023 and the Capital Programme for the next 3 years to Members and these showed clearly the extent of economic activity of Cork County Council. He said Cork County Council has seen an increase of €31 million in running

its services and that there was a €276m increase in the 3 year capital budget. There has been a spend of €578 million in housing construction alone. He said the budget shows a commitment to climate adaptation and action across services.

Mr. Lucey said Cork County Council is struggling with the impact of geopolitical crisis in Europe. Local Authorities are not protected from rising inflation costs. The population of Cork County has grown by 27,000 causing extra demands on the services of the Council. He said population growth is welcome but it does create increased pressures on services.

The Chief Executive thanked the Members of the Corporate Policy Group for their co-operation on the budget process. He said to Members that it has not been possible to meet the demands of each directorate in the proposed budget for 2023 but the GMA, TDF and VEF funds were protected.

The Chief Executive said a 3.5% rates increase for ratepayers is being proposed in this budget. He said a budget must be produced that maintains service delivery. He said the staffing numbers of Cork County Council reflect the level of growth in infrastructure delivery. Cork County Council employed 2,474 staff before the boundary transition and that number is now close to 2,474 again. He said there has been an increase of 20 outdoor staff and accepts that more outdoor staff are required, but additional funding is needed to provide more staff.

Mr. Lucey said Cork County Council is doing well as an organisation but an increase of 3.5% in rates is required to ensure the maintenance and growth of services. He said he was happy to recommend the adoption of the Budget Book as presented.

The Mayor welcomed Ms. Loraine Lynch, Head of Finance and her team. He acknowledged the work previously done in the Municipal Districts, Corporate Policy Group and the Development Committee in the preparation of the budget.

The Head of Finance informed Members the Budget has been prepared in accordance with the Local Government 2001 Act, as amended. The Draft Annual Budget has been prepared in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group. It sets out the expenditure estimated to be necessary to carry out the Council's functions, and the income estimated to accrue to the Council for 2023.

The Head of Finance confirmed that a copy of the Draft 2023 Budget, together with a report outlining the provisions of that draft, was issued to every Member of the Council.

She began by saying the Draft Budget for 2023 is €403.2m up from last year by €30.7m and funded by €255.6 million from income divisions, €125.95 million from rates and €17.8 million from LPT. She said there is €3.9 million deficit to be funded from revenue reserves.

**She outlined the challenges faced by Local Authorities including:**

- Inflation 9.2% and external pressures on supply chain have reduced our purchasing power and led to significant expenditure increases
- Inflationary Control Measures : Mortgage/ Loan Interest Increases (ECB 1.25% ytd)
- War on Ukraine – Energy Crisis – €4.2m est. increase in energy costs
- Growing activity levels across all services, including roads and municipal services, are driving costs up
- Increased investment in Public Spaces with upgrade of and additional facilities leads to increased maintenance
- Increasing the demand for economic development support and investment, including property and town regeneration to assist our local business in our towns and villages

### **She outlined the key objectives of Draft Budget 2023:**

1. Maintaining Service Levels:
  - Core Housing, Roads and MD Services maintained at 2022 budget levels
  - Additional funds allocated to assist to Frontline Services (possible only with proposed increase to ARV of 3.5% )
  - Town presentation/approaches fund maintained at €1million
  - Increase of €4.2m applied to Provision for Energy across all areas
2. Climate Adaptation Activities:
  - Creation of New Coastal Management Reserve €150k
  - Climate Action Fund of €400k maintained
3. Focus on Supporting Communities:
  - GMA, TDF and VEF maintained at 2022 levels €3.317m
  - Specific funds for town centre rejuvenation/economic development/Arts Programme maintained

### **She outlined the funding sources contributing to Budget 2023:**

- LPT
- Grant Income
- Goods and Services Income
- Departmental Support

#### **LPT**

- Discretionary LPT Income of €17.8 million following Members decision to retain basic rate variation at 7.5% which maintained LPT income at 2022 levels
- Self funding LPT revenue element for Housing & Roads shown as grants in Divisions A & B (€6.73m) of the Budget Book
- Appendix 2 of the Budget Book details the LPT allocation & apportionment

#### **Reserves Utilisation**

- Revenue Reserve at 31/12/2021 was €7.5m
- Draft Budget has been prepared on a deficit basis of €3.9m

### **Ms. Lynch outlined other sources of income:**

**Grant Income - €140m and is 35.3% of overall income and is an increase of €16.6m on 2022 and includes:**

- Additional Grant Income €1m to deliver the Homelessness Program
- New Croí Cónaithe Towns Grant Scheme €1m
- Additional Grant Income for delivery of Affordable Housing Scheme

**Goods & Services Income - €115.5 is 29.3% of overall income and includes:**

- Increase of €100 k to Planning Fee income
- Housing rent review and new houses - €1 m rent and €1 m loan interest

## Departmental Support of €23m and includes:

- Pay agreement compensation €20m
- Support of €3m towards Energy Increases

Ms. Lynch said the Council's overall Annual Rate on Valuation remain unchanged from 2008 to 2021. In 2022 the ARV was increased by 3% but Cork is one of the few County Councils which has not adjusted its ARV in the previous 14 years. The burden to ratepayers has actually reduced, taking into consideration the increase in inflation. A proposed increase of 3.5% to Annual Rate on Variation (ARV) has been budgeted. Ms. Lynch acknowledged that the rates liability to businesses will be increased. She said the proposed increase is well below the level of inflation. She said without this increase it will not be possible to maintain current Council service levels.

Ms. Lynch said the rate increase would not have a material impact on many of the Council's customers as the majority of rate payers are smaller accounts.

She gave the following examples:

<b>Rate Payers</b>	<b>3.5% increase would cost</b>
30% have rate bills less than €1,000	an average €19.89 a year
55% have rate bills under €2,000 and	an average €34.22 a year
70% are under €3,000 and	an average €44.87 a year

Ms Lynch introduced the SME Rates Incentive Grant Scheme for 2023 which will assist with the ARV increase for all rate payers. She said the SME Rates Incentive Grant Scheme is in acknowledgement of the current economic climate and the challenges faced by many businesses. Ms. Lynch gave an example of a grant of 3.5% of annual bill, capped at maximum bill of €2,000. The maximum relief any ratepayer will receive is 3.5% of €2000 is €70. She said 55% of rate payers should see no increase to their ARV. She said at a minimum, ratepayers must pay an amount equivalent to annual rates bill to be paid in full by 31st August 2023. The scheme is to apply to all ratepayers countywide.

She stated, however, a 3.5% increase in ARV will have a significant impact for the Council for service delivery and it allows an additional 10% to Budgets for front line services and outlined the main proposed budget allocations from €2.11m as follows:

• Housing Maintenance	€1.034m
• Op & Maint Public Conveniences	€99,353
• Litter Control Initiatives	€59,258
• Operation Street Cleaning	€84,245
• Maintenance of Burial Grounds	€106,990
• Operation Fire Brigade Service	€266,737
• Leisure Facilities Operations	€73,471
• Library Service Operation	€201,815
• Parks; Pitches & Open Spaces	€103,145
• Playgrounds	€37,911
• Beaches	€24,004
• Heritage	€23,639

**Economic Development Fund (EDF)** 1% of rates income annually ringfenced for the EDF increased the EDF increased to €1.25m for 2023 which supports hospitality, tourism, festivals, biotech and food sectors and town regeneration and property activation.

She outlined the following:

- **Ringfenced funds**
  - Presentation of towns and village €1m
  - Town Development Fund (TDF) €0.95m
  - Village Enhancement Fund (VEF) €0.55m
- **Match funding – for schemes such as Town & Village / ORI are as follows:**
  - Town & Village Renewal Schemes €1.37m (€208k CCC)
  - Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Projects €1.223m (€165k CCC)

Ms. Lynch said there are additional payroll costs in the Draft 2023 budget. The additional costs are arising from Pay agreements (Public Service Stability Agreement) as follows:

- October 2022 - 3% of annualised pay backdated to February 2022
- March 2022 – 2% of annualised pay
- October 2023 -1.5% of annualised pay or €750 per annum whichever is the greater
- Pension and gratuities increase requirement - €1m

### **Climate Change Adaptation and Biodiversity**

Ms. Lynch stated there was a specific provision of €400,000 for Climate Change Initiatives included in the budget. She said Directorates across the organisation have an ever increasing focus on Climate Change.

She outlined the Climate Change Adaptation and Biodiversity across services:

### **Housing**

- All newly built houses have minimum energy rating of A2/A3.
- The Energy Efficiency/Retrofitting Programme (EERP) include the provision of external wall insulation, new windows and doors, attic insulation and Heat Pumps. These programmes will continue in 2023 with a further 150 properties throughout the county being retrofitted

### **Public Lighting:**

- LED retrofitting national project which will see upwards of 31,000 lights retrofit
- All new public lights fitted with LED lights

### **Fleet Management:**

Fleet Replacement Programme commenced to upgrade the fleet with newer technologies to achieve climate change targets.

### **Coastal/ Flood Defence Schemes:**

- Engaging with UCC re 3-year research project to aid Council in developing an overall strategy for managing coastal erosion.
- New Reserve for Coastal Management of €150,000 has been created to provide foundation for future works.

### **Municipal Districts:**

- Library Buildings being audited on water and energy consumption
- Public realm design work puts pedestrian and cycling facilities to the fore
- Landscape architects are including meadow areas where applicable in designs
- Natural building materials are considered where economically viable

Ms Lynch then outlined the draft Budget by divisions A-H

## **Division A – Housing**

### **Expenditure**

- Increase of €1.1m to the Expenditure budget for the maintenance and improvement of Local Authority Housing
- Continue to drive our VOIDS programme of €4.9m (€4.8m 2022).
- Croí Cónaithe Towns Grant €1m
- Better Energy Communities programme of €320k maintained
- Increase in Homeless Services to €5m – 10% funded by Council (increase €1m)
- Payment and Availability Scheme €7.5m (contra)
- Provision of €9.6m for the delivery of the Social Housing PPP programme for which Cork County Council is the Lead authority (increase €300k)
- DPG and Mobility Grants of €5.7million (80% grant funded)

### **Income**

- Rent review and increase in Housing stock will generate €1M
- Increase in Grant Income of approx. €2.8m (Affordable Housing 800k, Croí Cónaithe €1m, Homeless €1m)
- Loan Interest (Recoup) €1m

## **Division B – Roads**

- The Roads Budget for 2023 has been increased to reflect the increasing cost of fuel, electricity and materials
- Grant allocations for national local and regional roads are in line with expectations for 2023 CLÁR projects earmarked for completion across the county have been provided for to the value of €331,000 under Low Cost remedial measures
- Public lighting provision has been maintained at €350,000 and provides some funding for the loan requirement for the public lighting energy efficiency project
- Pay Parking Dividend – provision is made for the continuation of a total dividend of €270,000 in 2023 which is dependent on realisation of the budgeted parking income in 2023

## **Division C – Water**

- Irish Water expenditure under SLA is fully recoupable (C01, C02, C06, C07)
- Flood Relief (OPW funded) – €1.3m provided for the management of Flood Schemes reflecting the investment in flood protection
- Increase in the funding for the Provision of Public Conveniences €212K
- Private Grant Water Schemes increase of €594k (contra income)

## **Division D – Development Management**

- Provision of €430,000 is maintained for the County Development Plan process including advertising, consultation, meetings, printing and Irish translation
- SICAP provision maintained at €1.92m
- Economic Development Fund increased to €1.245m with continued dual focus on economic development support and town activation & regeneration
- Provision for Tourism Operations & Development including Michael Collins House, Camden Fort and Spike Island as well as small increase in support for festivals
- Increase to Conservation & Commemoration Budget to reflect increased activity €459k ( partly grant funded)
- Town & Village Renewal €1.37m (€1.162m contra income, match-funding €208k)
- Budget Provision for LEO expenditure of €4.6(contra income) to support business growth
- Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure grant - €1.24m (€165k match funding provided for)

## Division E – Environmental Services

### Expenditure

- Financial resourcing of street cleaning has been increased with a draft budget of €3m.
- Increase in Funding for the provision of the maintenance of burial grounds has been increased with a draft budget of €2.38m
- The designated Climate Action Fund is retained at €400k to reflect the Council’s focus on Climate Action.
- The operation of civic amenity sites has increased by €0.35m due to increased activity, costs of disposal of materials and energy increases.
- Investment in the regional WERLA office increased by €75,000 to meet the growing needs of dealing with waste enforcement and awareness (grant funded)

## Division F – Recreation & Amenity

Ms. Lynch said the 2023 budget for Libraries has increased to €13.1m. The book fund has been protected and additional funding will be provided to deliver on the National My Open Library Service and to the library e-resources program. The funding has been increased for the maintenance of parks and open spaces to €5.9m, due to the opening of a number of new parks (Haulbowline etc) and greenways (Midleton to Youghal).

Taking on board Members views the GMA/TDF/VEF have been retained the €3.3m split as follows :

	<b>GMA</b>	<b>TDF</b>	<b>VEF</b>
	<b>€</b>	<b>€</b>	<b>€</b>
Carrigaline MD	188,598	120,000	68,750
Cobh MD	183,394	120,000	68,750
East Cork MD	241,218	120,000	68,750
Fermoy MD	198,250	110,000	68,750
Kinsale Bandon MD	208,100	115,000	68,750
Macroom MD	197,253	98,000	68,750
Mallow Kanturk MD	284,913	139,000	68,750
West Cork MD	314,000	130,000	68,750
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,815,726</b>	<b>952,000</b>	<b>550,000</b>

## Division G – Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare

- Continued Provision for Dredging Programme €180k
- Continued Provision of €1.5m for Piers and Harbours to maintain service delivery level
- Maintained Reserve for Piers & Harbours €50K.

- Creation of new Coastal Erosion Management Reserve €150k.

#### **Division H – Miscellaneous Services & CMC**

- Increase in Machinery yard supporting Area Services delivery (contra).
- Provision for Infrastructure Programme of €1.15m retained.
- Inclusion of Dept compensation towards costs of pay agreements of €20 m and Energy Supports €3m
- Extra pension requirement of €1 m.
- ICT Budget increase of €462k mainly due to the continuation of Office 365 implementation, remote working, and increased Security & SAN support.

The Head of Finance said the preparation of draft budget 2023 has been a challenging process but the budget presented achieves its objectives:

- Maintaining Service Levels by providing additional funding to cover inflation for Core Housing, Roads and MD Services maintained at 2022 budget levels and
- Additional funds allocated to assist to Frontline Services
- Commitment to Climate Adaptation Activities
- Focus on Supporting Communities through retention of Member’s discretionary funds

The Head of Finance presented the Capital Programme from 2023 – 2025 to Members. She informed Members the Capital Programme has been prepared in accordance with Section 135 of the Local Government 2001 Act, as amended. Ms. Lynch outlined the Capital Investment Programme (€1,273 m) and said:

- ambitious programme which aligns with the vision to develop County Cork as an attractive place to live, work and visit in all its communities
- prepared based on the information and priorities currently available
- rolling programme which will change as allocations received, statutory process is progressed

#### **Capital Investment Programme 2023 – 2025:**

Ms. Lynch outlined the Capital Investment Programme 2023 – 2025 and said it was a 3 year rolling programme.

The progression of any project must take account of:

- Contractual obligations in relation to ongoing works
- Works to be undertaken on foot of grant allocations
- Prioritising projects that can attract funding from other sources
- Prioritising those projects that will yield greatest economic and social dividend
- Projects necessary to continue a reasonable level of advancement in particular areas
- Stretching our limited internal resources to maximise the economic stimulus attainable over the next few years
- Identifying funding source/revenue streams for future lifecycle maintenance costs

Commencement of Projects will only be allowed as per the normal statutory processes and compliance with the Public Spending Code.

Strict adherence to national stipulations in terms of ensuring balanced capital account.



### **Capital Investment Programme 2023 – 2025:**

- Increase of €275m over the 2021 – 2023 Capital Programme (27%)
- Housing a key priority for the Council and comprises 45% of the Programme with an increase of €172m over the 2021-2023 Capital Programme.
- Roads Infrastructure accounts for €454m (36%) due to some Major National Road Schemes with an increase of €73.4m over the 2021-2023 Capital Programme.
- Importance of Sustainable Community and Cultural investment through recreation facilities, libraries, public realm, greenways, playgrounds and connection hubs.
- IBP Retained Earnings Distribution of €13m investment in risk improvements to infrastructure:
  - Footpath Programme €6m 2023-2028;
  - Playground Refurbishment €3m
  - Public Realm €4m

### **Capital Investment Programme 2023 – 2025 & Climate:**

- Cork County Council is committed to build climate resilience into every aspect of the work we do
- Impact of the Climate Adaptation Strategy is reflected in the increased emphasis across all categories with €484m climate adaptation related projects including:
  - Investment in active travel measures across the county €117.5m
  - Public Lighting Retrofitting – (PLEEP Lead Authority & Additional) €54m
  - Energy efficiency works
    - Swimming pool upgrades €6.4m
    - Building Retrofits €22.9m
    - Housing Stock Repairs & Upgrades €38m
  - Fleet upgrade €16m
  - Flood Mitigation & Drainage Related Works €33m

Ms. Lynch outlined the funding sources of the Capital Programme:

- Government Grants
- Borrowing
- Development Contributions
- Internal Capital Receipts – Housing
- Capital Reserves
- Provisions in the Revenue Budget

**She then outlined a summary of major areas of proposed expenditure as follows:**

#### ***Housing:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €578.35 m

Grant Income: €537.98 m

Local Authority Funding: €2.59 m

Loan / Other Income: €37.78 m

Funding to be Sourced: -

#### ***Roads:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €453.83 m

Grant Income: €325.26 m

Local Authority Funding: €31.96 m

Loan / Other Income: €63.02 m

Funding to be Sourced: €33.59 m

#### ***Other Works:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €215.19 m  
Grant Income: €84.75 m  
Local Authority Funding: €25.73 m  
Loan / Other Income: €32.30 m  
Funding to be Sourced: €72.41 m

***Water Services:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €26.08 m  
Grant Income: €17.98 m  
Local Authority Funding: €1.87 m  
Loan / Other Income: €1.27 m  
Funding to be Sourced: €4.95 m

***Public Realm:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €90.68 m  
Grant Income: €48.78 m  
Local Authority Funding: €5.90m  
Loan / Other Income: €9,21 m  
Funding to be Sourced: €26.79 m

***Recreation & Amenities:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €65.65 m  
Grant Income: €26.26 m  
Local Authority Funding: €6.50m  
Loan / Other Income: €12.20 m  
Funding to be Sourced: €20.68 m

***Libraries:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €22.06 m  
Grant Income: €4.76 m  
Local Authority Funding: €1.21 m  
Loan / Other Income: € 7.43 m  
Funding to be Sourced: €8.66 m

***Tourism & Enterprise:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €7.88 m  
Grant Income: €0.91 m  
Local Authority Funding: €0.97 m  
Loan / Other Income: € 2.21 m  
Funding to be Sourced: €3.79 m

***Burial Grounds:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €4.24 m  
Grant Income: -  
Local Authority Funding: €2.63 m  
Loan / Other Income: €1.25 m  
Funding to be Sourced: €0.37 m

***Environment:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €7.07 m  
Grant Income: €0.10 m  
Local Authority Funding: €2.34 m  
Loan / Other Income: -  
Funding to be Sourced: €4.63 m

***Coastal Protection:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €8.48 m

Grant Income: €6.83 m

Local Authority Funding: €0.93 m

Loan / Other Income: €0.27 m

Funding to be Sourced: €0.45 m

***Flood Relief:***

Total Investment 2023 – 2025: €15.90 m

Grant Income: €9.88 m

Local Authority Funding: €0.94 m

Loan / Other Income: €1.00 m

Funding to be Sourced: €4.08 m

She said the 3 year rolling programme was prepared after significant analysis by all directorates and progression is based on existing capital commitments and compliance with public spending.

The Mayor thanked the Head of Finance, Loraine Lynch, Patricia O'Leary and the Finance team for preparation of the Draft Budget.

The Mayor said that the Budget showed there is a lack of funding from central government as highlighted in the AIRO report and said he had requested a meeting with An Taoiseach and Ministers McGrath and Coveney. He said funding must be found somewhere to maintain services. The Mayor said he cannot support an increase for any low ratepayers as small businesses are struggling with rising costs. He suggested an increase in the Rates Incentive Grant Scheme to ratepayers should be considered and invited Party Leaders to speak.

**During the discussion, the Members made the following points:**

- Members thanked the Chief Executive, Ms. Lynch and her staff for the work in preparation of the Budget.
- Members said small and medium businesses need to be protected from impact of any rate increases.
- Stated there needs to be a generous threshold on the Rates Incentive Grant Scheme.
- Smaller businesses are crippled in terms of their overheads and costs.
- Businesses in rural towns and villages are particularly vulnerable.
- Said passing a balanced Budget was their statutory role and failure would mean calling in administration.
- There is a cashflow pressure for owners of smaller businesses.
- Government has provided great support during the pandemic and energy crisis.
- Members supported increasing the rate incentive scheme.
- Some Members said they do not agree with the 3.5% increase rates increase.
- Said they are concerned that the increased spending of €31 million will be consumed by inflation.
- Acknowledged the budget is difficult in terms of what is being proposed.
- Must be mindful that businesses who can't pay won't pay.
- Asked if the shortfall on the budget is €1.4 million? Now that additional government supports were given.
- Members said it is positive to see great investment going into the County.
- Acknowledged population growth is putting significant pressure on the Council.
- Queried if it would be possible to offer seasonal outdoor staff full time positions.
- Said outdoor staff is a priority.
- Said they welcomed ambitious Capital Budget.
  - Members complimented the focuses in the budget in terms of housing and maintenance.

- Welcomed the €578 million allocated to housing in the budget.
- Asked how the housing maintenance figure compares to other years.
- Queried the energy and retrofitting figure and how it compares to previous years.
- Regarding the Croí Cónaithe scheme, asked if a blanket €1 million was given to each Local Authority.
  
- Members queried what percentage of the funds available for the Mallow Relief Road will go towards building the road.
  
- Members asked if there is a clear programme in place to deal with dereliction.
- Stated dereliction and vacancy is a big issue.
- Said 19 Local Authorities offer less than the 100% refund on rates in respect of vacancy.
- Said it is worth exploring at reducing it down from 100% to 95%.
- The income could be spent on the Town Development Fund or the Village Development Fund.
- Asked what a 10% charge on those vacant buildings would bring into the county.
- Members asked for an update on the funds that have been ringfenced in previous budgets for the Economic Development Fund.
- Asked for the refund on Vacant Commercial Properties to be assessed for Budget 2024.
- Members asked that the revenue raised in towns from parking charges remain in that town.
  
- Members said outdoor services need to be maintained and improved
- Disappointed on the progress of outdoor staffing numbers
- Asked for a clear commitment on prioritising outdoor staffing
- Said businesses have to see Cork County Council visible on the streets if they are paying increased rates
- Members welcomed the work done on Climate Adaptation in the budget
- Would like road planning to be supplanted by active travel programmes in the future
  
- Members asked if rates could be also decided for 2024 – suggested no increase for 2024.
- Members said they are happy with the amount being allocated in the budget for coastal erosion

### **Extension of Time**

As the time was now 1.15pm, an extension of time was requested.

*Proposed: Councillor Pat Hayes*

*Seconded: Councillor James Kennedy*

The Mayor thanked all for their contributions to the debate.

### **The Chief Executive responded as follows:**

He welcomed the recognition from Members that Cork County Council needs to increase its revenue base. He said over 50% of rate payers will not be paying any increase. The Chief Executive said Cork County Council will never put any business out of business for non payment of rates but will work with ratepayers. He said 81% of ratepayers currently have a clean bill. He said more ratepayers are in credit than debit. There has been good government support for rate payers. He said that legislation does not allow a two tier ARV or allow targeting certain categories of ratepayers.

He said the budget is going up by 7.7% and inflation is at 9%. Mr. Lucey said he is happy to discuss outdoor staff numbers at Corporate Policy Group in the new year and to work with Members. He said there has been a 14.9% increase in outdoor staff since the boundary transition. There are 10 posts for

outdoor staff to be filled. He said he cannot recruit beyond what is committed to in the budget and a workforce plan was in place.

In response to the queries on dereliction & Croí Cónaithe, he said Cork County Council has been stretched by the humanitarian crisis. He said extra staff have been allocated to deal with those issues. He said whatever is spent on Croí Cónaithe will be received back from the government.

Mr. Lucey said he will come back to the Corporate Policy Group on the issue of pay parking in the new year. He said progress on the Economic Development Fund is included in the Economic Report that is given to Full Council on a quarterly basis. He said if Members decided to raise the cap from €2000, this would have to be funded and said that Members can only decide on rates for 2023 at this meeting.

**The Head of Finance responded to the Members' discussion:**

- Ms. Lynch said 100% relief is available on vacant properties.
- Said it is premature to consider it for 2023 and she does not have enough information to consider it for 2023 Budget and would need more data as there are many parameters to consider.
- Advised it can be considered for 2024, but not enough information to consider it in full today
- Said €10 million has been allocated for the Mallow Relief Road under the Capital Programme

**Extension of Time**

As the time was now 2pm an extension of time was agreed.

*Proposed: Councillor James Kennedy*

*Seconded: Councillor Karen Coakley*

Members said that an increase of 3.5% meant business had a rate increase of 6.5% in two years. Said asking top 56 ratepayers to contribute more wasn't accepted.

**The Head of Finance responded:**

- Some utility companies were due a refund of rates and the estimated impact was €1.2m for 2023. The funding from government will be used here.
- She was not in favour of budgeting based on a deficit and must be prudent with revenue reserves.
- Said the rules for LPT had changed to allow for setting a charge for two years but this cannot be done for rates – can only set for following financial year.

**Time:**

2.20 – A recess was agreed

*Proposed: Councillor Cathal Rasmussen*

*Seconded: Councillor Declan Hurley*

Meeting recommenced at 14.50.

**2. TO DEAL WITH SUCH DRAFT BUDGET IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001, AS AMENDED, AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (FINANCIAL PROCEDURES AND AUDIT) REGULATIONS 2002.**

The Mayor informed members that they had three resolutions to consider, the first being the Adoption of the Council's Budget for the local Financial Year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

## **RESOLUTION 1:**

### **ADOPTION OF THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET FOR THE LOCAL FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2023**

Proposed by Councillor Alan Coleman , seconded by Councillor Martin Coughlan

“That pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31.12.2023 as presented by the Chief Executive and as set out in Tables A - F, be and is hereby adopted”

#### **Amendment 1:**

“That pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31.12.2023 as presented by the Chief Executive and as set out in Tables A-F, be and is hereby adopted with the following amendment: The threshold for the Rates Incentive Grant Scheme be increased from €2,000 to €7,000 with the cost to be funded as follows:

- 50% by way of transfer from Economic Development Fund – D0905 TO H030
- Increase on deficit funding from general revenue reserves.

Proposed by Councillor Seamus McGrath, seconded by Councillor Marcia D’Alton

The Mayor requested that a vote be taken on the amendment with the above amendment, which resulted as follows:

**FOR:** Councillors Coughlan, Coleman, O’Donovan, Collins D, Murphy PG, O’Connell, McGrath, D’Alton, Buckley, Dalton O’Sullivan, O’Callaghan, Rasmussen, O’Connor A, O’Flynn, O’Brien, O’Leary, Roche, Moynihan B, Doyle, Moynihan G, Looney, Coughlan M, Hayes Pat, Murphy Gearóid, Kennedy, Healy , Twomey, Ahern, Quaide, Kelly, Carroll, Hurley , Coakley

[33]

**AGAINST:** Councillors Murphy K, O’Sullivan J, O’Sullivan M, Cronin, Murtagh, White, Barry, Sheppard, McCarthy Noel, Dawson, O’Shea JP, Murphy Gerard, Creed, Lynch, Lucey, Madden, O’Shea T, Hegarty, McCarthy Susan

[19]

**ABSTAIN:** None

[0]

The Mayor declared the resolution carried.

## **RESOLUTION 2:**

### **DETERMINATION OF THE ANNUAL RATE ON VALUATION FOR THE LOCAL FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2023**

Proposed by Councillor Seamus McGrath, seconded by Councillor Declan Hurley

“That pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, and in accordance with the Local Authority Budget for the Financial Year ending 31 December 2023, as adopted, the annual rate on valuation be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for the said Financial Year. The Annual Rate to be levied shall be **79.68.**”

**FOR:** Councillors Coughlan, Coleman, O'Donovan, Collins D, Murphy PG, O'Connell, McGrath, D'Alton, Buckley, O'Callaghan, Rasmussen, O'Connor A, O'Flynn, O'Brien, O'Leary, Roche, Doyle, Moynihan G, Looney, Coughlan M, Hayes Pat, Murphy Gearóid, Kennedy, Healy, Twomey, Ahern, Quaide, Kelly, Carroll, Hurley, Coakley

[31]

**AGAINST:** Councillors Murphy K, O'Sullivan J, O'Sullivan M, Cronin, Murtagh, White, Barry, Sheppard, McCarthy Noel, Dawson, O'Shea JP, Murphy Gerard, Creed, Lynch, Lucey, Madden, O'Shea T, Hegarty, McCarthy Susan

[19]

**ABSTAIN:** None

[0]

The Mayor declared the resolution carried.

### **RESOLUTION 3**

#### **RATES VACANCY REFUND**

Proposed by Councillor Seamus McGrath, seconded by Councillor Frank O'Flynn

“That pursuant to the provisions of Section 14 of the Local Government Act 1946, as amended by Section 31(3) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, Cork County Council will continue to apply a 100% rates vacancy refund for 2023”.

The Mayor requested that a vote be taken, which resulted as follows:

**FOR:** Councillors Coughlan, Coleman, Murphy Kevin, O'Sullivan J, O'Sullivan M, O'Donovan, Collins D, Murphy PG, O'Connell, Cronin, McGrath, D'Alton, Murtagh, Buckley, White, O'Callaghan, Barry, Sheppard, Rasmussen, O'Connor A, O'Flynn, O'Brien, O'Leary, Dawson, Roche, Doyle, O'Shea JP, Murphy Gerard, Creed, Moynihan G, Looney, Coughlan M, Lynch, Lucey, Hayes Pat, Murphy Gearóid, Kennedy, Madden, O'Shea T, Healy, Hegarty, Twomey, McCarthy Susan, Ahern, Quaide, Kelly, Carroll, Hurley, Coakley

[49]

**AGAINST:** None

[0]

**ABSTAIN:** None

[0]

The Mayor declared the resolution carried.

The Mayor thanked the Head of Finance Loraine Lynch, and other members of the Finance team for their work on the 2023 Budget. He also thanked the Chief Executive and all Members for their engagement with the process of finalising the 2023 Budget.

### **[K] VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS**

**TO:** O' Donovan Rossa Ladies U16 on winning The County Final in the B Championship

**TO:** Anthony & Rosanne Sheehy on the launch of their new vessel “Ocean Crest”

**TO:** Ringaskiddy Community Hall on opening their newly refurbished hall

**TO:** Katie O'Keefe on winning the Gold Medal for Team Munster in the Carpathian Cup in Poland

**TO:** John Murphy on winning the DP World Tour in Golf

**TO:** Crosshaven AFC Junior Team on winning the FAI Junior Cup

**~ THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING ~**