

**MIONTUAIRISÍ AN CHRUINNITHE BHUISÉADAIGH REACHTÚIL
A TIONÓLADH DÉ HAOINE, 24 SAMHAIN, 2023 AG 3.00 P.M.**



**MINUTES OF STATUTORY BUDGET MEETING HELD
ON FRIDAY, 24TH NOVEMBER, 2023 AT 3.00 P.M.**

Chair: Cllr. Michael Doyle.

Elected Members: *Council Chamber*

Cllrs. John Brennan, Tomás Breathnach, Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Pat Fitzpatrick, Martin Brett, Peter Cleere, John Coonan, Fidelis Doherty, Maria Dollard, Pat Dunphy, David Fitzgerald, Ger Frisby, Joe Malone, Michael McCarthy, Andrew McGuinness & Eugene McGuinness.

MS Teams

Cllrs. Deirdre Cullen, Matt Doran, Denis Hynes, Joe Lyons & Eamon Aylward.

Officials: Lar Power, Sean McKeown, Martin Prendiville, Mary Mulholland, Tim Butler, Fiona Deegan, Seamus McGuire, Gerry Tyrrell, Catherine Cooney & Anne Maria Walsh.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Michael Doyle welcomed all Members to the Statutory Budget Meeting. He stated that the Council will consider a Budget of €111m for the County of Kilkenny for the Year 2024. He invited Mr. Lar Power to present his Report.

Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive advised Members that the Report on the Budget has been circulated and he will take it as read.

He stated that choices have been made to present a balanced Budget of €111m. This is an increase of 12% over the Budget for 2023. The draft Budget maintains the full range of core services while also providing match funding for a number of programmes such as Climate Change and Town Regeneration. It is important that the Council drives the economic development of the County. Development is important as it has a positive impact and provides for better places to work and invest in. The Council also has an ambitious Capital Programme and this will need to be funded at all times. We have to be mindful of the financial stability of the Council. He advised Members that the Budget presented is fair and balanced and he recommends adoption of the draft Budget for 2024 to the Members.

Cllr. Michael Doyle thanked the Chief Executive and invited Mr. Martin Prendiville, Head of Finance to give an overview of the Budget and present details of each Service Division.

Mr. Prendiville advised that the Budget Book was issued to Members on 14th November, 2023. Draft budgetary plans have been adopted by each Municipal District for the General Municipal Allocations subject to funding being available. He advised that discussions are ongoing with Uisce Éireann in relation to finalising a budget for 2024 for Water Services. The Draft Budget assumed full cost recovery from Uisce Éireann. We await Road Grant Allocations for 2024 but this does not materially affect the Budget presented.

Three Workshops have been held with the Elected Members to discuss the details of the Budget. These Workshops have been invaluable in shaping the Budget for 2024. Difficult decisions had to be made in terms of spending priorities.

Mr Prendiville advised that in the preparation of Budget for 2024, a number of factors required to be considered - our current Financial Position & various challenges which have arisen this year and for the year 2024. Overall, this Budget maintains funding for all core services and funding has been increased in a number of areas. There have been no cuts in any Service Areas.

He outlined the main challenges/highlights of Budget 2024:

- No increase in the Commercial Rate multiplier.
- No changes in Prompt Payment incentive – capped at €250.
- Vast majority of expenditure is fixed in all Service Areas. Discretionary expenditure equates to 2%/3% of the total Budget *[listed on Pages 10, 11 and 12 of Budget Report]*.
- Inflation is still a factor.
- Increases in expenditure in the following areas:
 - Housing Maintenance
 - Housing Grants
 - Local Roads
 - Tourism
 - Yulefest
 - St. Patrick's Day
 - Heritage Programmes
 - Street Cleaning
 - Burial Grounds
 - Civil Defence
 - Fire Services
 - Book Fund
 - Parks Maintenance
 - Watergate Subvention

to name a few.

- Increases in Central Management Change in IT Costs and Pensions.

Mr Prendiville outlined the proposed increases included in the Budget for additional income:

- LPT Income is increased by €1.5m as a result of the national baseline review of LPT.
- Housing Rents increased by €911k.
- Car Parking increased by €242K.
- Vacancy refund on Rates reduced to 50% - yielding extra income of €400k.

Mr. Prendiville referred Members to the Report which outlines the key provisions in the 2023 Budget.

In summary, Mr. Prendiville advised the following:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Total Draft Expenditure..... | €111.134m |
| Income from Grants, Goods & Services..... | €76.5m |
| Local Property Tax | €13.3m |
| Commercial Rates Income..... | €21.35m |

At this stage, Mr. Prendiville advised that he will highlight some of the significant items in each Service Division and referred Members to the first Service Area.

1. Service Division A: Housing & Building

Total Expenditure € 26.26m Total Income €28.06m

- Housing Maintenance – Increase of €180k.
- Provision for salary increases.
- Homeless – increase in Grants of €320k.
- RAS – expenditure reduced by €750k.
- Long Term Leasing increased by €800k.
- Rents – additional income by €911k arising from additional Units and ongoing rent reviews.
- Housing Loans – additional income - €400k.

On the proposal of Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That the expenditure and income in Service Division A was considered and noted."

2. Service Division B: Road Transportation Safety

Total Expenditure € 29.96m Total Income €22.17m

- Provision for Municipal District – allocation maintained at €200k.
- Provision for Local Roads Maintenance – increased by €200k.
- Loan Charges provided for PLEEP - €250k.
- Road Grants notification due early 2024.
- Car Parking income – additional income - €242k.

On the proposal of Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That expenditure and income in Service Division B was considered and noted."

3. Service Division C: Water Services

Total Expenditure € 7.70m Total Income €7.55m

- Expenditure 100% to be recouped from Uisce Éireann – discussions ongoing.
- Group Water Scheme Grants – reduced by €120k.
- Increase in expenditure for Public Convenience - €9k.

On the proposal of Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That the expenditure and income in Service Division C was considered and noted."

4. Service Division D: Development Management

Total Expenditure €14.72m Total Income €7.23m

- Additional expenditure of Payroll costs across this Division.
- Increased provision for Yulefest and St. Patrick's Day - €40k.
- Increased provision for legal costs and enforcement.
- Additional expenditure on number of Community Programmes – 100% recouped.
- Provision for Ukrainian Displacement - €2.5m – 100% recouped.
- Provision Night Time Economy Officer, Bio Diversity Officer and Broadband Officer – 100% recouped.
- Planning Fees Income – increase of €12k.

On the proposal of Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That expenditure and income in Service Division D was considered and noted."

5. Service Division E: Environmental Services

Total Expenditure €16.90m Total Income €6.66m

- Bring Banks/Recycling – Increased Maintenance Costs - €15k.
- Provision for Litter Control/Clean Up Kilkenny – Increase €39k.
- Increases of €30k for Street Cleaning.
- Increases of €28k for Burial Grounds.
- Increase of €21k for Civil Defence.
- Substantial Increases for Fire Service – increase in salaries/wages, pensions, WRC Agreement, payment to Waterford City & County Council.
- Provision for additional payroll costs for Climate Action.

On the proposal of Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That the expenditure and income in Service Division E was considered and noted."

6. Service Division F: Recreation & Amenity

Total Expenditure €8.58m Total Income €282,261

- Reduction of €148k in capital provision for Leisure Facilities.
- Increase in operation of Libraries - €273k – Book Fund and opening of Mayfair Library.
- Increase in provision for Parks operational costs - €118k
- Maintained provision for Sporting bodies to include Camogie and Community Grants.
- Increase in subvention for Watergate Theatre - €16k.

On the proposal of Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That expenditure and income in Service Division F was considered and noted.

7. Service Division G: Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare

Total Expenditure € 689,747 Total Income €482,197

- Provision increased for Dog Control - €11k.
- Reduction in cost of Horse Control - €12k

On the proposal of Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That expenditure and income in Service Division G was considered and noted."

8. Service Division H - Miscellaneous Services

Total Expenditure €6.33m Total Income €4.03m

- Provision for Refunds/Irrecoverable Rates of €2.0m.
- Change on Vacancy Policy – reduced provision - €400k.
- Increase provision for Register of Electors - €42k.
- Increase provision for Members Gratuity - €25k.
- Recoupment of 100% for staff on secondment.

On the proposal of Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That expenditure and income in Service Division G was considered and noted."

It was proposed by Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That Kilkenny County Council makes a scheme for the abatement of rates due to it by liable persons, or classes of liable persons, in respect of vacant properties in accordance with the provisions of Section 9 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019, as amended.

Such a scheme in respect of vacant property will provide for an abatement of 50% of rates due to Kilkenny County Council by liable person for the financial year ending 31st December 2024."

It was proposed by Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That for the financial year ending 31st December, 2024, Kilkenny County Council will maintain the Rates Incentive Grants Scheme to a grant of 5.8% of the 2024 rate demand (excluding arrears) up to a maximum value of €250 subject to the satisfying of existing terms and conditions"

It was proposed by Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:

"That the Budget of Kilkenny County Council for the financial year ending 31st December, 2024 as set out in Table B, be adopted, without amendment".

It was proposed by Cllr. Mayr Hilda Cavanagh, seconded by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and agreed:
"That the rates set in Table A, of the Draft Budget of Kilkenny County Council for the year ending 31st December, 2024 be determined in accordance with the said Budget to the Annual Rate on Valuation to be levied for that year for the purposes set out in Table A, without amendment."

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael Doyle thanked Mr. Lar Power and Mr. Martin Prendiville for the detailed overview of the Budget for 2024.

Cllrs. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Andrew McGuinness and Tomás Breathnach acknowledged all the work involved over the last few months in preparing the 2024 Budget in these difficult and challenging times. Budget 2024 has provided for the protection of the full range of services and grants to organisations and communities and are delighted that the Budget has been passed unanimously. It is important to retain relationship with our communities. The Members thanked their fellow Councillors for engaging fully in the preparation of the Budget and for their attendance at the many workshops. They thanked the Chief Executive and Head of Finance for the time given to all the Members during the preparation of the Budget and for being available to answer these queries at all times.

Mr. Martin Prendiville thanked all involved in the Budget process especially the Elected Members, the Whips and the Cathaoirleach for their contribution and robust discussions on the various issues in the Budget during the Workshops. He also thanked the Management Team, the Finance staff and all staff involved in preparing Budgets and Reports.

Chief Executive, Lar Power stated that it has not been easy to present a balanced Budget but this process has been a demonstration of the excellent manner in which the Executive and Elected Members must work together to deliver for the people of Kilkenny.

He thanked his colleagues on the Management Team for their input in the preparation of the Budget. He expressed sincere gratitude to Martin Prendiville and his team in Finance for the budget preparations. He also thanked Martin for his dedication and perseverance during the process. He willingly made himself available at all times to Elected Members over the last few weeks. He paid tribute to all the Finance Staff for their work in financial management over the year. He thanked all the staff across the Council for all the work throughout the year.

Mr Power thanked the Elected Members for their attendance at Workshops and their due diligence and careful consideration given to the budget process. He expressed thanks in particular to the Whips for their guidance.

Finally, he thanked the Cathaoirleach for his support and all the Elected Members for their civic leadership throughout the year.

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael Doyle thanked Lar Power, Martin Prendiville and all staff for their preparation of the Draft Budget. He thanked all the Elected Members for engaging in the process and attending the Workshops.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH

DATE