

# Public Document Pack

## Minutes of Leitrim County Council Budget meeting held Via Zoom on Monday, 30 November 2020

**Members Present:** Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire  
Councillor Enda McGloin  
Councillor Sean McGowan  
Councillor Brendan Barry  
Councillor Frank Dolan  
Councillor Gerry Dolan  
Councillor Caillian Ellis  
Councillor Pádraig Fallon  
Councillor Paddy Farrell  
Councillor Des Guckian  
Councillor Felim Gurn  
Councillor Sean McDermott  
Councillor Thomas Mulligan  
Councillor Paddy O'Rourke  
Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn  
Councillor Enda Stenson  
Councillor Justin Warnock

Councillor Mary Bohan (Cathaoirleach) presiding

**Officials Present:** Lar Power, Chief Executive  
Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructural Services  
Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action and Cultural Services  
Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services  
Kieran Brett, Meetings Administrator  
Kathleen Ellis, Assistant Staff Officer  
Finian Joyce, Chief Fire Officer  
Terry McGovern, Senior Engineer  
Una Wynne, Financial Management Accountant

At the outset of the meeting the Members extended a vote of sympathy to Kathleen McGovern Ellis on the death of her father Mr Owen McGovern R.I.P

### **MM.165.20 Consider the Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31st December, 2021**

The Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan invited Mr. Lar Power, Chief Executive to give an overview of the Draft Budget for 2021.

Mr Lar Power referred to the Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 as circulated to each Member. A copy of the Budget document as circulated to the Members appears as **Appendix 1** to the Minutes of this Meeting in the Minute Book.

Mr Lar Power outlined that, as the Members are acutely aware, 2020 has proven to be a very challenging year for citizens and in particular the business sector of County Leitrim and it was also a challenging year for Leitrim County Council. Covid-19 and the subsequent restrictions presented a challenge for Leitrim County Council in finding new ways to deliver services while complying with public health guidance to suppress the virus and minimise the risk to staff and customers alike.

The impact of Covid-19 generated significant uncertainty both nationally and locally regarding the financial management of Local Government, particularly in the context of the potential for the loss of income from commercial rates, goods and services and increased expenditure incurred in responding to the pandemic.

In mid-2020, the Government announced a Commercial Rates waiver for six months which was subsequently extended to nine months, and applicable to occupied properties subject to certain exclusions. The government also announced the Business Restart Grant, which was administered by Leitrim County Council. To date 470 businesses have received €3.41m in County Leitrim, with over €1m projected to be paid in the coming weeks in the form of top ups and appeals. The Government are currently considering submissions regarding Covid-19 costs incurred by Local Authorities together with income lost on goods and services and Mr Power stated he was optimistic that compensation will be forthcoming in this regard.

He advised that the 2021 Budget has therefore been framed in the context of very strong support from Central Government. The Annual Rate of Valuation (.2208) remains unchanged at 2020 levels and it is also recommended that the Commercial Rates Vacancy Refund Scheme (75%) remain unchanged at 2020 levels. Mr Power informed the members that the purpose of refunding only 75% of rates in respect of vacant commercial properties is to change the culture of having commercial properties lying idle for extended periods of time or indefinitely. Such vacant units seriously affect our towns and villages and make it extremely difficult for adjacent trading businesses to trade to their potential. Changing culture takes time and Leitrim County Council need to rid our towns of villages of vacant premises and this is one of the key methods to achieve this.

The purpose of having a commercial rates vacancy refund at 75%, is not primarily to generate income. It should be noted that if 2021 was not to be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the projected income from the vacancy refund scheme would be approximately €70,000. Leitrim County Council is equally conscious that the Governments nine-month rates waiver does not apply to vacant properties in County Leitrim. Therefore, Mr Power said he was proposing to introduce a hardship appeal process, applicable specifically for the duration of Covid-19, for rate payers who own vacant properties and who are experiencing undue hardship arising from the impact of Covid-19. Applications from property owners under this process will be considered on a case-by-case basis. An estimated total cost of €20,000 has been factored into the Budget Book as presented for this scheme. A similar

scheme will be applicable for 2020 to cover the duration of Covid-19.

He outlined that the budget will position County Leitrim to maximise the potential for economic recovery in 2021. It shows an overall increase in expenditure to €42.76m, an increase of €3.128m on 2020, with budget increases in areas of strategic importance such as Local Roads, Housing Maintenance, Tourism and Economic Development.

The Capital Investment Programme is a significant driver in Budget 2021. In line with commitments previously given to members, Budget 2021 again provides for the ringfencing of income to meet the ongoing requirements of the programme.

The budget will also sustain and expand upon the services of the Council as required by the residents of the county, visitors to the county and all other service users. In this regard the resources available to Leitrim County Council are being deployed in the areas where they are required most.

Mr Power outlined that the Budget takes into account the increased expenditure arising from Covid-19, future investment, enhancement of current services, prudent fiscal management and outlines in greater detail through the relevant statutory tables the key deliverables for 2021.

Leitrim County Council will continue to work in collaboration with all state agencies, local development organisations, the business community, and local community and voluntary sectors to maximise all available opportunities post Covid-19 to address local needs and support the economic, social and community development of the county.

Mr Power thanked Cathaoirligh, Cllr Mary Bohan, Cllr Enda McGloin, the Corporate Policy Group, and the Members of the Council for their contribution and support over the past financial year. He also thanked the Mr. Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, the Directors of Services, the Financial Accountant and all the staff involved in the preparation of this budget.

Mr Power said this is an expansionary budget because of the support provided by the Government and he formally recommend the draft Budget 2021 for adoption.

He outlined that Mr Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action and Emergency Services would give an overview of the Draft Budget for 2021 as circulated to the Members.

It was agreed that Mr. Dwyer would proceed to give an overview of each Division and that questions arising would then be addressed after each Division

Mr. Dwyer gave a detailed overview of the budgetary process and the structure of the Budget document. A copy of the presentation as delivered, and as circulated to the Members, appears as **Appendix 2** to the Minutes of this Meeting in the Minute Book.

The following items were raised

- Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn sought clarity in relation to the proposed hardship scheme. She expressed concerns that decommercializing premises was not the intention of the scheme and is not encouraging new businesses to start-up. Cllr Ita Reynolds Flynn proposed that the Commercial Rates Vacancy Refund should be considered at a meeting in 2021, well in advance of the preparation of Budget 2022 with all information on the scheme being made available to the members. She stated that she will not be making a decision on this in 2021 without the relevant information.
- Councillor Caillian Ellis sought an update in regard to roads being repaired in the Fenagh area following works by Irish Water.
- Councillor Justin Warnock welcomed the inclusion in the budget of the €20,000 Hardship Appeal Mechanism for property owners with vacant rateable commercial properties impacted by Covid-19. He queried how this will be directed towards small indigenous businesses in the County and he acknowledged how important it is that small businesses are supported.
- Councillor Des Guckian outlined his view that the current commercial rates vacancy refund should be raised to 90%.
- Councillor Pdraig Fallon thanked Vincent Dwyer and all the staff in the Finance Department in relation to the processing of the Business Restart Grant. Cllr Fallon queried as to what percentage of the projected income does the €20,000 waiver relate to.
- Councillor Felim Gurn queried how many vacant commercial properties are there in the County currently.
- Councillor Brendan Barry sought clarification on the vacancy refund scheme criteria and how it will impact a property that may have to close down next year due to a further lockdown as a result of Covid-19. Cllr Barry also sought an update on the top-up Restart Grants, as many businesses are waiting for top-up grants, as they are trying to purchase stock so as to be ready for when Level 5 restrictions are lifted.
- Councillor Frank Dolan supported the introduction of Commercial Rates Vacancy Refund Scheme in 2019 and proposed that the scheme be continued for at least another year. Cllr Frank Dolan expressed concern in relation to the provision being made available in the hardship fund as a large number of businesses may be applying for this fund.
- Councillor Enda McGloin supported the Commercial Rates Vacancy Refund scheme and queried if derelict buildings in towns and villages are being billed for rates.

Councillor McGloin proposed that an Urban Renewal Scheme be introduced for our towns and villages.

- Cllr Bohan how beneficial the scheme was in achieving its objective. She stated its introduction was a good idea to improve towns and remove vacancy. She proposed that the matter be considered by an SPC in 2021.

In response to the queries raised, Mr Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action and Emergency Services responded as follows:

- Budgetary matters are not considered by an SPC but rather by the Corporate Policy Group. Such issues can be raised anytime with the Corporate Policy Group or if a member so wishes, as Head of Finance, he is available to discuss further any issues in this regard. If property owners wish to delist their property and convert it to private domestic dwelling, they will no longer be subject to Commercial Rates but will be subject to pay LPT on the property at that point.
- Leitrim County Council is currently awaiting prices from the contractor to carry out works in the Fenagh area. It is hoped to have the works completed by year end.
- The Hardship Appeal Fund will be very much targeted at small property owners in the local communities.
- A Commercial Rates Vacancy Refund of 75% is at the lower end of what is happening nationally. The amount of refund applied will have to be considered in the future and this will depend on the success of the scheme. Leitrim is second in the Country for the highest number of commercial vacancies.
- 40% of Commercial properties that have applied for the 75% refund are in use or have been sold because of the Commercial Rates Refund Scheme. 85 payments were received in 2019, 40% were as a result of movement from vacancy back into commercial use.
- There are 260 vacant properties out of a total of 1,100 rateable commercial properties in the county.
- The Valuation Office delists properties and the most of these 260 properties are still listed. The Rates Act 2019 Section 13 states that the owner of a property will have to pay all rates before the property is sold which will encourage business owners of properties to take action in relation to their properties.
- The Covid-19 related hardship fund criteria will be applied with the same thresholds as for the Business Restart Grant. Circumstances will be determined in relation to Covid-19 and the €20,000 fund will be sufficient.
- €700,000 will be paid out next week in Business Restart Grants and a number of

appeals are still outstanding and will be dealt with in the coming weeks.

Councillor Des Guckian queried as to why County Leitrim has the highest number of vacant commercial properties in Ireland

In reply, Mr Vincent Dwyer said a Local Authority provide supports to potential entrepreneurs and property owners have the responsibility to bring their properties into use.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan supported Cllr. McGloins' proposal on the Urban Renewal Scheme outlining a motion in this regard could be considered at a future meeting.

### **Division A – Housing and Building**

Mr. Vincent Dwyer gave an overview of the provisions in Division A – Housing & Building.

The following items were raised:

- Councillor Des Guckian said that he would like the figure under Long Term Leasing broken down into more detail in the interests of transparency.
- Councillor Pdraig Fallon queried if the figures in Housing Maintenance are correct, as he believes more funding will be needed in this area and queried if there is scope in the budget to increase this figure. Cllr Fallon also queried the amount of the Homelessness budget.
- Cathaoirleach Councillor Mary Bohan pointed out that at the workshop held last week it was agreed that any issues Members may have on the Budget that they were to contact the Head of Finance or the pertinent Directors. Cllr Bohan acknowledged Cllr Des Guckian was not in attendance at the workshop.
- Councillor Enda Stenson queried if there are enough of houses available for the HAP Scheme.
- Councillor Sean McDermott proposed that Leitrim County Council have more serviced sites in some less populated rural communities to allow people to get mortgages and allow them to live in their own communities and this in turn would reduce depopulation.
- Councillor Felim Gurn queried the number of voids and their turn around time.
- Councillor Justin Warnock welcomed the number of properties purchased by Leitrim County Council and queried how many were purchased in 2020. Councillor Warnock sought an update on the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans Scheme.

In response to the queries raised Ms. Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services responded as follows:

- Leitrim County Council participate in RAS and the Leasing Programme. The Council advertise and seek properties for these schemes. Ms Quinn confirmed the Long-Term Leasing figure relates to payments made to a number of different landowners and not just one. Ms Quinn confirmed she will revert to the Member in question with any further breakdown or clarity he requires.
- The planned Housing Maintenance Programme will also facilitate the upgrading of fire detection devices and the installation of carbon monoxide detection devices in the remainder of all Council houses. The draft budget provides for an increase of €20,000 in routine housing maintenance.
- The additional budget under homelessness relates to increased staff resources.
- The availability of houses for the HAP scheme is not an issue currently but may be an issue in the future.
- A provision of €300,000 is included under casual vacancies.
- Covid-19 impacted on the turnaround times for voids, it was 25-26 weeks at the start of the year. The actual turnaround time will be available and presented at the March 2021 Council meeting.
- 13 properties have been purchased by Leitrim County Council during 2020.

In response to the queries raised Mr Vincent Dwyer, responded as follows:

- Table F as presented in the Budget Book is broken down into sub-divisions and the pertinent level of details and information has been presented to the Members.
- Under the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans scheme
  - 2 are awaiting HFA approval
  - 12 applications have been approved to date

### **Division B - Road Transport & Safety**

Mr. Vincent Dwyer gave an overview of the provisions in Division B – Road Transport and Safety.

The following items were raised:

- Councillor Frank Dolan complimented Leitrim County Council for the quality and standard of roads in the County and queried when works will commence on the N16.
- Councillor Des Guckian queried as to why there is no figure included for National Secondary Roads.
- Councillor Enda Stenson concurred with Cllr Frank Dolan's remarks and sought an update on the N4 Carrick on Shannon By Pass.
- Councillor Brendan Barry queried as to why the gritting of roads in Keshcarrigan cannot be extended by a further 2.5 kms in the Winter Maintenance Plan.

In response to the queries raised Mr Terry McGovern, A/Senior Engineer, Infrastructure responded as follows:

- Works on the N16 – Approval from the TII for the appointment of a contractor will be received before the year end with the contract commencing in 2021. The TII regional office in Westmeath will be dealing with the tender.
- There are no National Secondary Roads in Leitrim.
- Phase 1 of the N4 Carrick on Shannon to Dromod Bypass public consultation is complete. This is a long process and Roscommon TII are dealing with this.
- Gritting cannot be extended on the route in the Keshcarrigan area as raised, as Leitrim County Council have not got the capacity to do this. This is covered under Priority 3 during bad weather as per the Winter Maintenance Plan.

Mr. Joseph Gilhooly, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructural Services advised that significant process has been made on the Carrick-on-Shannon By Pass since Leitrim County Council met the TII and a programme has been put in place in this regard.

### **Division C - Water Services**

Mr. Vincent Dwyer gave an overview of the provisions in Division C – Water Services

The following items were raised:

- Councillor Enda McGloin referred to difficulties regarding extensions to group schemes in Ballinamore and the exorbitant costs charged by Irish Water.

- Councillor Sean McGowan outlined Irish Water are not getting enough funding from the Government and if they don't have the resources this will result in huge problems for the 10-12 schemes in the County.
- Councillor Des Guckian expressed his concerns and highlighted the difficulties the Committee of the Hartley Cartown Group Scheme are experiencing over the last 6 years and the contribution required which has increased to €19,000 per house. Cllr Des Guckian said it was a disastrous situation and outlined his concerns regarding the handling of the matter by Leitrim County Council. Councillor Des Guckian highlighted that Leitrim Rural Water and Housing have been involved.
- Councillor Pádraig Fallon queried if the Finance Department could prepare a comparison report of what it would cost if the Local Authority was to deliver the same water service as Irish Water.
- Councillor Paddy O'Rourke highlighted the 2 successful schemes completed in Carrigallen before Irish Water was established. Cllr O'Rourke said that no progress in this area has been made since. Councillor O'Rourke highlighted this issue needs to be raised at National level.
- Councillor Enda Stenson outlined his view that Irish Water is no longer fit for purpose and this issue needs to be raised at a national Level.

In response to the issue regarding Hartley Cartown Scheme, Mr. Joseph Gilhooly, responded that this issue was raised as a motion at the last Carrick-on-Shannon Municipal District meeting and the following was outlined:- Leitrim County Council do not accept that the Hartley Cartown GSS was handled badly. The Committee for the Scheme were facilitated to the greatest extent and kept informed as new information was received from the Department. The Part 8 Planning Approval process was delayed as there was an issue in acquiring the sites for the pumping stations, and further archaeological and ecological studies had to be completed. On obtaining Part 8 Planning Approval, Leitrim County Council requested the Group Water Scheme Consultant Engineer to provide a detailed cost estimate for the scheme, based on his design which had to be in compliance with Irish Water Standards. The cost estimate received was €1,100,000 ex. vat for the site investigations and construction contract. In addition, design costs, Irish Water Connections costs, and Archaeological and Ecological Report Costs brought the total estimated cost of the Scheme to €1.455 million – an estimated cost of almost €32,000 per house. The revised costings were submitted to the Department for funding. The Department confirmed in writing that the maximum amount of funding available would be €13,000 per house. Leitrim County Council outlined the response from the Department to the Committee and informed them of the funding gap of approx. €19,000 per house. The Committee for the Scheme was requested to consider the costings as presented and consider whether it was feasible to progress with the Scheme given the revised estimated costs and the fact that the Scheme/Households would have to fund the shortfall between the estimated total cost of the Scheme (almost €32,000 per house) and the Grant available for the Scheme (€13,000 per house) – a shortfall of approx. €19,000 per house. Leitrim County Council still awaits the

outcome of the Committee's deliberations.

Councillor Des Guckian outlined it was a scandal and the Council did not support the development of the scheme.

In reply to Cllr Des Guckian, Mr. Gilhooly stated there was no scandal, all details have been fully detailed, and Leitrim County Council have given full support to the scheme.

Councillor Sean McGowan sought clarification on the agreed price per house.

Mr. Joseph Gilhooly confirmed €32,000 per house is the price, the Department will give a grant of a maximum of €13,000 per house leaving a funding gap of €19,000 per house. The issues in relation to cost are outside the control of the Council.

The Chairperson outlined the matter had been dealt with at the MD meeting and that members should be careful in talking about corruption and scandal.

Mr. Vincent Dwyer in reply to Cllr Fallon said that it would be very difficult to prepare a comparison report as Leitrim County Council have only an advisory role to Irish Water in Leitrim and have no role in capital infrastructure development. Leitrim County Council do not have any sight of the goods and services Budget spent by Irish Water in providing services in Leitrim.

### **Division D - Development Management**

Mr. Vincent Dwyer gave an overview of the provisions in Division D – Development Management

The following items were raised:

- Councillor Sean McGowan sought clarification if the Business Restart Grant was included in this division.
- Councillor Des Guckian noted there is a considerable cost involved with unfinished housing estates.
- Councillor Brendan Barry sought clarification on the significant outturn on the Goods and Services in Table F of the budget.
- Councillor Enda McGloin welcomed the additional spending in Tourism and Marketing. Councillor McGloin acknowledged that a considerable amount of money has been spent on unfinished housing estates and a lot of these developers have left.

While painful from a taxpayer's view, Cllr McGloin thanked the Plan acknowledged the work of the Planning Dept. in dealing with unfinished estates which has ultimately resulted in the provision of additional and affordable housing.

- Councillor Padraig Fallon also welcomed the increase in spending in Tourism and Marketing and highlighted that the contribution paid by Leitrim County Council to Knock Ireland West Airport is vital.
- Councillor Paddy O'Rourke said the expenditure on unfinished housing estates is regrettable but the amount of affordable housing coming on stream and providing housing for families is very welcome.
- Councillor Caillian Ellis stated that Leitrim County Council is not promoting our County enough and said that our signage in the County needs better maintained.
- Councillor Sean McDermott proposed Leitrim County Council consider a position for a Programme Events Manager to promote all the events that take place in County Leitrim.
- Councillor Felim Gurn said County Leitrim should put a greater focus on the English market.
- Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire said it is important to focus on the visitors to our county, as these visitors may be encouraged to live in our communities and be our future inhabitants. Cllr Armstrong McGuire paid tribute to the excellent work carried out on Phase 1 of the Carrick on Shannon streetscape project.

In response to the queries raised Mr Vincent Dwyer, responded as follows:

- Unfinished Housing Estates provision primarily relates to payroll expenses.
- €4.4 million of a Business Restart Grant is included in this division.

Mr. Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services responded as follows:

- Leitrim County Council is finalising plans to lead a major marketing initiative in collaboration with the tourism sector to support and enhance economic recovery as the Covid-19 pandemic recedes in mid-2021.
- Leitrim County Council will continue to provide for the promotion of Leitrim as a tourist destination. This Council will continue the strategic alignment of resources with the activities of key partners such as Waterways Ireland, Failte Ireland, and Inland Fisheries Ireland.

- Leitrim County Council will continue to seek opportunities to secure funding to facilitate the delivery of additional tourism related product/marketing investment and maximise the potential of Slow Adventure Tourism in collaboration with the Wild Atlantic Way and Hidden Heartlands marketing programmes. Slow Adventure will depend on travel circumstances.
- Upkeep of the County is very important and is a key priority.
- A Shop Local Campaign is taking place in Carrick-on-Shannon giving Leitrim County Council an opportunity to work with Carrick-on-Shannon Chamber of Commerce

### **Division E - Environmental Services**

Mr. Vincent Dwyer gave an overview of the provisions in Division E – Environmental Services

The following items were raised:

- Councillor Frank Dolan sought an update on the Fire Station in Manorhamilton
- Councillor Sean McGowan proposed that Leitrim County Council embark on a refuse/roadside litter campaign. Cllr McGowan stressed that is a blight on our County and more resources must be put into the area of litter control. Councillor McGowan queried if there is any further update on a Waste Regulator being appointed.
- Councillor Enda McGloin queried as to why there was a campaign seeking firefighters in the County recently, as this was never an issue before and has the criteria for firefighters changed.
- Councillor Felim Gurn queried how many kilometres can a Firefighter live from the fire station they are assigned to.
- Councillor Pdraig Fallon expressed his concerns in relation to the removal of on-street litter bins throughout the county and particularly in North Leitrim. Councillor Fallon proposed that litter bins be reinstated as the costs involved in the clean-up is much greater than having the bins in place and queried if dog foul bins could also be provided.
- Councillor Mary Bohan acknowledged that household rubbish was being put into on-street bins resulting in an overflow of rubbish and leaving the area around them very unsightly.
- Councillor Justin Warnock enquired as to the cost to Leitrim County Council associated with getting the forest fire near Drumshanbo extinguished by the Fire Service of Leitrim County Council.

In response to the queries raised Mr Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance, Water, Environment, Climate Action and Emergency Services responded as follows:

- Under the Litter Management Plan there are ongoing campaigns and if members have ideas in relation to getting this issue under control these can be considered by the Environment Section.
- The absence of litter bins encourages people to be responsible in dealing with their own waste. There are currently 3 Community Wardens employed who deal with this issue.
- No notification has been received by the Local Authority to date on the Waste Regulator

In response to the queries raised on the Fire Services Mr Finian Joyce, Chief Fire Officer responded as follows:

- It is hoped that final designs will be finalised by the end of the year with approval to go to tender secured by mid 2021.
- Seven vacancies arose within the fire service in Leitrim and 2 have been filled to date. The criteria for recruiting firefighters has not changed. The problem appears to be the lifestyle involved and this is not only an issue in Leitrim but nationally. There is a review group being setup nationally to review terms and conditions.
- Firefighters must be living within 3 kms of the fire station and be able to respond within 5 minutes to fire calls.
- Leitrim County Council have recouped a lot of the costs from Coillte in regard to the Fire in Drumshanbo and this has not impacted on Leitrim County Council's resources.

Councillor Mary Bohan paid tribute to all the Tidy Towns and Community Groups for all their hard work and she appealed to the public not to litter our County.

### **Division F - Recreation & Amenity**

Mr. Vincent Dwyer gave an overview of the provisions in Division F – Recreation & Amenity

The following items were raised:

- Councillor Enda McGloin sought an update on the Library operations and Library recruitment in light of previous IR issues.
- Councillor Enda Stenson sought an update on the Reginal Sports Campus.
- Councillor Brendan Barry proposed that a provision be made available to Towns and

Villages for Christmas lights.

- Councillor Brendan Barry sought clarification on the provision of €5,000 in the Budget for Conferences Abroad and why the provision for Motor Tax had increased considerably.
- Councillor Des Guckian queried as to what members availed of the Conferences Abroad and if reports had been submitted back to the Council in this regard.
- Councillor Sean McGowan referred to the provision of Land Drainage costs and queried if these provisions could be increased significantly.
- Councillor Paddy O'Rourke said the provision made for Land Drainage was insufficient.
- Councillor Justin Warnock proposed that allocations that are underspent to be made available to community groups for playgrounds. Councillor Ita Reynolds Flynn and Councillor Sean McGowan supported Cllr Warnock's proposal.
- Councillor Caillian Ellis queried as to who is responsible for the area outside the perimeter fence of playgrounds.

In response to the queries raised Mr Vincent Dwyer, responded as follows:

- Motor Taxation and Customer Services have been combined into one unit and one additional member of staff has been recruited for this unit for 2021.
- The amount for Conferences Aboard relates to members foreign travel which has all been recouped for 2020. Members travel arrangements for the St. Patrick Day festivities in New York had been booked and paid for in advance but were subsequently cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated costs have since been reimbursed.
- There is no further capacity to fund flood migration works.

Councillor Enda McGloin outlined the events he travelled aboard to in his capacity as Cathaoirleach of Leitrim County Council for the term 2019/2020.

In response to the queries raised Ms. Mary Quinn, responded as follows:

- The industrial relations issues that impacted on the Library Service have been resolved and there will be a restoration of the Library service post Covid-19.
- The policy on playgrounds can be reviewed by the SPC in 2021.
- Leitrim County Council is responsible for the area of the playgrounds inside the perimeter fence.

## **Division H – Miscellaneous Services**

Mr. Vincent Dwyer gave an overview of the provisions in Division H – Miscellaneous Services

The update was noted.

### **MM.166.20 Adoption of Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31st December 2021**

Councillor Mary Bohan proposed that the Budget as presented be adopted and Councillor Enda McGloin seconded this proposal.

Councillor Des Guckian made a counter proposal to oppose the Budget as presented stating the budget lacked vision. There was no support for Councillor Guckian's counter-proposal.

Councillor Mary Bohan said it is not for the Members to talk down Leitrim. Funding that is received into Leitrim is well spent. Leitrim is one of the best counties for securing funding for projects and this is a credit to the staff who are working to secure the funding.

#### ***Proposed by Councillor Mary Bohan seconded by Councillor Enda McGloin AND AGREED***

"That Leitrim County Council adopts for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021, the Budget set out in Tables A - F, and further resolves to determine in accordance with the said Budget the rates set out in Table A to be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for 2021 for the purposes set out in those Tables."

### **MM.167.20 Determine, by resolution, the Annual Rate on Valuation to be levied for the financial year ending 31st December 2021 for the several purposes specified in the Adopted Budget**

#### **Proposed by Councillor Mary Bohan seconded by Councillor Enda McGloin AND RESOLVED**

"That Leitrim County Council hereby determines in accordance with the Budget as proposed and adopted by the Members, the Annual Rate on Valuation to be levied for the several purposes specified in the Budget as **€0.2208**, for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021."

### **MM.168.20 Approve, by resolution, the application of a 75% Commercial Rates Vacancy Refund for 2021 in respect of vacant rateable properties in Leitrim**

#### **Proposed by Councillor Mary Bohan seconded by Councillor Enda McGloin AND RESOLVED**

"That Leitrim County Council hereby adopts the application of a 75% Commercial Rates Vacancy Refund for 2021 in respect of rateable vacant properties in the administrative area

of Leitrim County Council specified in the Budget for the Financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021”.

**MM.169.20 Certification**

The Cathaoirleach and the Chief Executive signed the Statutory Certificate to the effect that at the Budget Meeting of Leitrim County Council held this 30th November 2020, the Council by resolution adopted for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 the Budget set out in Tables (A to F) and by resolution determined in accordance with the said budget the Rates set out in Tables (B and C) to be the annual rate on valuation to be levied and the Application of a 75% Commercial Rates Vacancy Refund for that year for the purposes set out in those tables.

Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan thanked the Chief Executive, Mr. Lar Power, Management Team, Mr. Vincent Dwyer, Head of Finance and the staff of the Finance Team for the preparation of the Budget Book. Cllr Bohan thanked the Elected Members for the manner in which the meeting was conducted.

Mr Lar Power, Chief Executive thanked the Cathaoirleach and members for adopting the Budget and for conducting the Budget meeting through an online platform.

Ms Mary Quinn outlined that it is proposed to move the January Council meeting date from the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Councillor Enda McGloin queried if it was possible for the Ballinamore Municipal District meeting to meet face to face in December. Ms Mary Quinn said that it was agreed by the Corporate Policy Group that all meetings take place using online platforms until mid-January following which the matter will be reviewed in light of prevailing public health advice.

Councillor Pdraig Fallon thanked the IT staff and the Meetings Administrator for all the help and support in facilitating online meetings.

This concluded the business of the meeting at 1.49 pm

**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Councillor Mary Bohan**  
**Cathaoirleach**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Kieran Brett**  
**Meetings Administrator**

**Dated: Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

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