



# 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 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 at 11.30am.**

### **I LATHAIR**

#### **Comhairleoir Gillian Coughlan, Méara Chontae**

Comhairleoiri: Ó Dubhghaill, Ó Sé Sean Pól, Ó Murchú Gearóid, Críod, Ní Mhuineacháin G, Ó Luanaigh, Ó Cochláin M, Uí Loinaigh, Ó Luasa, Ó hAodha Padraig, Ó Murchú Gearóid, Ó Cinnéide, Ó Madaoin, Ó Sé T, Léanacháin - Uí Foghlú, Ní hEachthigheirn, Uí Thuama, MacCarthaigh S, Mac Uaid, Ní Cheallaigh, Ó Cearbhaill, Uí Chaochlaioich, Ó Haodha Pól, Uí Chochláin G, Ó Colmáin, Ó Murchú Caoimhín, Ó Suilleabháin Sean, Uí Shuilleabháin Máire, Ó Donnabháin, Ó Coileáin D, Ó Murchú PG, Mac Craith, Uí Daltún, Ó Muircheartaigh, De Faoite Sean, Ní Cheallacháin, Daltún Ó Suilleabháin, Barra, Sheppard, Rasmussen, Ó Conchubair S, Ó Conchubair A, MacCarthaig N, Ó Flionn, Uí Bhriain, Ó Laoghaire, Dawson, De Róiste.

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor Gillian Coughlan, County Mayor, presided.**

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

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

The Mayor outlined the Public Health Restrictions at the beginning of the meeting and reminded Members of the COVID-19 SOP management requirements of the meeting.

- 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 2022.**

The Chief Executive said he was here today to present the Annual Budget for 2022 to Members. He acknowledged the level of support the Council has provided to communities during Covid 19. He outlined the range of services in the county. He said there will be an increased emphasis on climate change. There will be significant measures in place that support towns and villages.

He will bring a briefing to Members in early 2022 on the Council's programme on Climate change. He will also brief Members in 2022 with updates on the Capital Programme.

He said the level of activity across the organisation and the cost of future proofing communities across county means an increased revenue budget will be needed. It is necessary to propose a 3% increase on ARV. And he said the was the first increase in over 11 years. The Council provides significant supports to businesses. €2.7 million will be collected in rates, but €0.5million will come from 80% of rates payers. MDA, TDF and VEF will all be maintained as the county continues to emerge from pandemic.

There will be a continued commitment in 2022 to Town Centre Renewal as the Budget provides for these. The Budget will provide for continued maintenance of beaches and amenity facilities.

The Mayor welcomed Ms. Loraine Lynch, Head of Finance and her team. She 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 2022.

The Head of Finance confirmed that a copy of the Draft 2022 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 2022 leaves a deficit of €4.1m which will be funded from the Revenue reserves.

She outlined the challenges faced by Local Authorities including:

- Brexit and the current pandemic have meant increased costs for many of services.
- Growing activity levels across all services, including roads and municipal services are driving costs up.
- Increased investment in our 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 towns and villages.

She stated that the Budget is funded either by our own resources or Government Grants.

Our own resources are made up of:

- Commercial Rates
- Small increase in goods and services
- LPT

### **LPT**

- Discretionary LPT Income of €17.1 million following Members decision to retain the basic rate variation at 7.5% which maintained LPT income at 2021 levels.
- €10 million from self funding LPT revenue element shown as grants for Housing and Roads in the Draft Budget.

### **Reserves Utilisation**

- Revenue Reserve at 31/12/2020 was €7.5m.
- Draft Budget has been prepared on deficit basis of €4.1m.

She stated if the Council received government funding of between €2m and €4m to cover increased costs and loss of income due to the effects of the pandemic, there will be no need to dip into the Reserve to fund a deficit at the end of 2021. A decision from government is expected on this matter shortly.

Ms. Lynch outlined other sources of income:

- **Grant Income**

- Additional grant income of €9.7m to deliver the Social Housing PPP Programme. She noted that Cork County Council is a Leader Authority.
- Increase of €2m to the Payment and Availability Scheme.
- Increase of €750K to the Voids program.
- €620K Non LA Mortgage to Rent Scheme (this involves working with Affordable Housing Bodies)

- **Goods & Services Income**

- Increase of €300k to Planning Fee Income
- Housing rent review and new houses - €1m
- Civic Amenity Site income increase of €265k

- **Other Income**

- Reduction in NPPR €561,000 (2009 fee no longer applies)
- Reduction in Superannuation Income €500,000

- **Commercial rates**

Ms. Lynch stated that rates represents 33% of the Council income.

- Budgeted on proposed increase of 3% to Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV)

She said it was anticipated that the Rates Yield in 2022 would be €118.8m. There would be some buoyancy over Budget 2021 of €2.9m. The ARV increase (3%) will give a gross income of €3.4m. This is a necessary increase and the decision to increase it was not taken lightly. She noted the ARV has remained the same since 2008. The Council is one of three Local Authorities that has not increased the ARV in this period. It takes into account that inflation has increased by 9.24%, over the last 10 years. The burden to ratepayers has actually reduced, taking into consideration the increase in inflation (CPI October 5.1%).

Ms. Lynch stated the rate increase would not have a material impact on many of our customers as the majority of our rate payers are smaller accounts:

She gave the following examples:

**Rate Payers**

30% have rate bills less than €1,000  
55% have rate bills under €2,000  
70% are under €3,000 and  
81% are under €5,000.

**3% increase would cost**

an average €16.89 a year (32c pw)  
an average €43.84 - €16.89 a year  
an average €74.32 - €16.89 a year  
an average €134.37 - €16.89 a year

She stated, however a 3% increase in ARV will have a significant impact for the Council for service delivery and it allows for the continuing provision of local services at current levels. It provides for the continuing investment and supports for Economic Development. She said that the supports the Council provided to business and local economies included:

- **Economic Development Fund (EDF)** 1% of rates income annually ringfenced for the EDF increased to €1.2m for 2022 which supports hospitality, tourism, festivals, biotech and food sectors and town regeneration and property activation.
- **Local Enterprise Offices (LEO)**
- **Project ACT:** Since May 2020 an ongoing initiative across 23 town to support business, retail, and communities in dealing with the impact of COVID -19 and to support our county towns as they re-opened for business including
  - Improve public space utilisation for pedestrians and business.
  - A Real Cork Christmas.
  - Provision of outdoor amenities, painting schemes, etc.
- **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**
- **Tourism & Festival Support**
- **Indirect Investment**
  - across all services to make the region an attractive proposition for economic growth, including maintenance and development of the transportation network, providing recreation and amenity facilities and opportunities, investing in the culture and heritage of the area.
- **Area and Municipal Offices provide multiple services including:**
  - community support,
  - road maintenance, and improvement
  - street cleaning,
  - parks and amenity maintenance
  - burial ground operation
  - Management of parking
  - Playgrounds & leisure facilities
  - Coastal, piers and harbours and beach maintenance/operations.
- **Investment has increased per capita in key service areas**
- **The Council has successfully secured and provided match funding for schemes including**
  - Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht Town and Village Renewal €1.588m (Match Funding €209k)
  - Outdoor Recreation Improvement (ORI) €1.38m (Match funding €273k)

#### **Retained Funding Initiatives 2022**

• Library Book Fund	€0.321m
• Arts Programme Creative Events for Towns	€0.15m
• GMA allocation	€1.82m
• Climate Action Fund	€0.40m
• Social Housing Disability works	€0.25m
• Housing Planned Maintenance Repairs	€0.38m
• Boiler Programme Maintenance & Replacement	€0.45m
• Provision for Dredging Programme	€0.18m

## Climate Change Adaptation and Biodiversity

- Climate Adaptation Strategy (2019) guides County Cork on the challenges it faces.
- The impact of climate change is a key consideration in any new investment being made.
- Ensure Climate Action and Biodiversity are included on all future developments.
- Focus on Nature Based Solutions such as Pollinator Plans, Creation of Woodland on Public Land Scheme with a Commitment to Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity.

Ms. Lynch stated there was a specific provision of €400,000 for Climate Change Initiatives included in the budget.

She outlined the Climate Change Adaptation and Biodiversity across services:

- **Housing**
  - All newly built houses have minimum energy rating of A2/A3.
  - At the end of 2020 energy efficiency works have been completed in over 5743 properties. In 2021 there are currently works underway on 85 properties and we are awaiting approval from the Department for an additional 100.
- **Roads**
  - Lead Authority in PLEEP.
  - All new public lights fitted with LED lights.
  - Fleet Replacement Programme commenced to upgrade the fleet with newer technologies to achieve efficiencies where possible, to meet its 2030 climate change targets.
  - Cycling Network Plan for the Cork City Metropolitan Area and surrounding towns.
  - Sustainable Transport measurement Grant increased to 15.7m in 2021.
- **Municipal Districts**
  - **Libraries** – Buildings being audited on water and energy consumption.
  - **Architects**
    - 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.
- **Coastal/Flood Defence Schemes**
  - Flood defences are designed to be adaptable to climate change.;
  - New flood schemes will require that flood management options are being considered from the outset e.g. Bantry.
  - Engaging with UCC on project to aid the Council in developing an overall strategy for managing coastal erosion.
  - New Coastal Erosion match funding €100k.

She outlined the draft Budget by Divisions in the following Table showing the expenditure/income and net amount to be funded from Rates & LPT:

## Draft Budget 2022 – Table A Divisions

Division Description	Draft Expend 2022 €	Draft Income 2022 €	Net to be funded €	% to be funded from Rates & LPT
<b>A</b> Housing & Building	70,614,919	64,564,785	6,050,134	4.32%
<b>B</b> Road Transport & Safety	92,740,875	59,881,791	32,859,084	23.44%
<b>C</b> Water Services	39,631,274	36,135,676	3,495,598	2.49%
<b>D</b> Development Management	38,713,085	11,706,678	27,006,407	19.27%
<b>E</b> Environmental Services	47,262,827	10,208,409	37,054,418	26.43%
<b>F</b> Recreation & Amenity	28,973,132	3,284,984	25,688,148	18.33%
<b>G</b> Agri; Educ; Health & Welfare	6,213,662	2,613,337	3,600,325	2.57%
<b>H</b> Miscellaneous Services	48,386,919	43,965,639	4,421,280	3.15%
	<b>372,536,693</b>	<b>232,361,299</b>	<b>140,175,394</b>	

## Payroll

Additional Costs arising from:

- Pay agreements (Public Service Stability Agreement)
  - October 2021 – 1% of annualised pay or €500 per annum whichever is the greater.
  - February 2022 – 1% of annualised pay
  - October 2022 – 1% of annualised pay or €500 per annum whichever is the greater.
- Pension and gratuities increase requirement - €1.9m
- Filling vacancies and essential additional posts e.g Area Services & Libraries & Outdoor staff in our municipal districts.

## Division A – Housing

### Expenditure

- Day to Day repairs maintained at 2021 service delivery level, with €43k increase for inflation.
- VOIDS programme has increased to €4.87 million (€3.57m in 2020), dependant on funding.
- Planned Maintenance increase to budget of €380k to align with the Planned Maintenance Programme arising from continuing Housing Stock survey.
- Better Energy Communities programme of €300k maintained.
- Increase in Homeless Services to €4m – 10% funded by the Council.
- Payment and Availability Scheme increase of €2m (contra)
- Provision of €9.7m for the delivery of the new Social Housing PPP programme for which Cork County Council is the Lead Authority.
- DPG and Mobility Grants of €5.92 million (80% grant funded).

## **Income**

- Rent review and increase in Housing stock will generate €1M
- Increase in Grant Income of €13m – (€9.7m PPP, €2m Payment & Availability, €750K Voids program, €620K Non LA Mortgage to Rent Scheme)

## **Division B – Roads**

### **Roads Allocations**

- Road grants maintained at 2021 levels.
- Expectation that grants will remain at 2021 amounts at least.
- Department will notify of actual 2022 allocations in January 2022.

**Public Lighting:** increased by almost €400K, provides some funding for the loan requirement for the public lighting energy efficiency project due to commence Q4 2021.

**Town Approaches/ Roadside Maintenance Programme:** €1m allocation maintained.

**Clár Programme:** Provision made for projects to the value of €331,000.

## **Division C – Water**

- Irish Water expenditure under SLA is fully recoupable (C01, C02, C06, C07)
- Flood Relief (OPW funded) - €870K provided for the management of Flood Schemes reflecting the investment in flood protection.
- Increase in the funding for the Provision of Public Conveniences €311K.
- Private Grant Water Schemes increase of €200K (contra income)
- Capital Projects salary costs moved to Capital

## **Division D – Development Management**

- County Development Plan– being funded from Reserves - €430k
- Increase in planning fees income €300k
- SICAP provision €1.92m – year 5 of 7-year programme
- Economic Development Fund increased to €1.2m 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).
- Reduction of LCDC ‘Community Development Initiative’ commitment to full provision of €3.5m fud remains.
- Town & Village Renewal €1.37m (€1.162m contra income)
- Budget Provision for LEO expenditure of €4.193 (contra income) to aid Business Recovery.
- Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure grant - €1.24m (€165k match funding provided for)

## Division E – Environmental Services

### Expenditure

- Increase in Civic Amenity and Bring Sites expenditure - €0.6m
- Street Cleaning Budget increased to €2.84m to match increase service demands.
- Provision for Dereliction remains - €103k.
- Increase to maintenance of Burial Grounds to €2.56m due to increased service demands.
- Increase in the investment in WERLA of €100k to meet growing needs of Waste Enforcement (contra).
- Increase to Climate Action Fund €400k (€365k 2020).
- Increase to the Budget for Landfill Operation and Aftercare - €178k.

### Income

- Increase in Fire Income - €250k

## Division F – Recreation & Amenity

- €350k increase to the provision of Parks Pitches and Open Spaces.
- Arts Programme delivery maintained at 2021 levels including specific fund for Arts Programme of creative events in towns
- Protection of Library Book Fund €321k.
- New investment in Library Services.
- Parking Dividend maintained at €270k.

Due to proposed increase to the Rates Valuation of 3% there will be retention of a total fund of €3.3m as follows:

	<b>GMA</b>	<b>TDF</b>	<b>VEF</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
- Creation of new Reserve for Piers & Harbours €50K.
- Creation of new Coastal Erosion match funding €100k.

## 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 €11.2m.
- Implementation of Moorehead Report for Members Payments €400k.
- Extra pension requirement of €1.9m.
- ICT Budget increase of €462k mainly due to the continuation of Office 365 implementation, remote working, and increased Security & SAN support.

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

The Chief Executive stated there is a commitment in the Budget to increase outdoor staff numbers. Presently the numbers are below the 2019 level.

The Mayor said that the Budget represents €372 million worth of investment into the county, much of which is grant funded and some of which needs to be raised. She said the services the Council provides are enhancing the lives of citizens of the county. She stated that the increase in rates is not an easy conclusion for Members and she recognised how difficult it has been for businesses in the past two years. She acknowledged that a small increase can be a difficult impact for small businesses. An average increase of €75 per year per business will balance the Budget and allow enhanced services to be delivered. Funding for town centre rejuvenation, property activation and tackling dereliction is ring fenced in the Draft Budget. She welcomed the investment in coastal erosion works. There is 100% rebate on vacancy in Cork County Council and a commitment to assisting with reactivating businesses. The Mayor stated that Members must consider the Budget presented to them and then opened the discussion to Members.

**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.
- ***Division A – Housing***
  - Welcomed increased funding for Homeless Services.
  - Want clarification on unfinished housing estates and winter maintenance reduction. Noted that Taking In Charge of old estates is still an issue in the Municipal Districts.
  - Welcomed allocation of €9.7 million for housing
  - Queried the decrease in Mobility Aids Grants as many elderly people rely on these grants.
- ***Division B – Roads***
  - Members stated that there was no political will in Mallow to reintroduce pay parking and asked if the budget is assuming the resumption of pay parking?
  - They asked if there are sources of funding available from government to continue the suspension of paid parking until next year as it was suspended in a number of towns due to COVID 19.
  - Members bemoaned loss of Town Councils. They noted that there are less staff on the ground in Towns than they were when the Town Councils were in place. Street Cleaning has been impacted. Capital grants allow Tidy Towns Committees to do great work but the voluntary groups cannot do all the work.
  - Members suggested a mobile service for street cleaning in the Municipal Districts and staff could be shared between towns and villages.
  - Suggested a delegation to the Minister for a funding request for the county roads.

- Appreciated the flood intervention funding for West Cork and acknowledged the positive impact of it.
  - Difficult to progress Traffic Calming measures in recent years. Only 0.5% of Roads Budget going to traffic calming.
  - Asked about the winter maintenance of national and regional roads.
- ***Division C – Water***
    - Requested increase for Group Water Schemes.
    - Noted there was no increase for the Group Sewage Schemes.
    - Requested more grant aid for these schemes.
    - Suggested seeking a meeting the Minister regarding the Group Sewage Schemes.
- ***Division D – Development Management***
    - Acknowledged the work the Chief Executive, Head of Finance and CPG did on developing a Budget. It was also discussed at Development Committee but certain issues were not flagged.
    - Members said that the increase in rates is sending out the wrong message to businesses across the county.
    - They said that there is a lot of uncertainty for businesses at the moment.
    - They spoke about the issue’s businesses are currently facing, e.g. increased sick leave due to Covid 19.
    - Acknowledged that the Council can only adjust 2 sources of income itself: Rates & LPT.
    - They said it is important as a Council to maintain a balance where businesses can create jobs in order to be able to pay rates.
    - Acknowledged that there has not been a rate increase for 12 years.
    - They stated jobs are fundamental to the wellbeing of our economy.
    - Members expressed concern at hindering job creation & economic activity.
    - They stated that the Council has been very prudent and going into the last economic crisis, there was a reserve of just over €17 million which now has been reduced. Hopes this reserve will be maintained in full at the end of 2021.
    - They said the increase of 3% is difficult for businesses in the nine towns that were Town Councils and where the rates equalisation process applied
    - Members queried if it was possible to have a 2 tier rate system or some rebate system for struggling businesses in county towns.
    - They stated that the 3% increase cannot be seen in isolation, with increases in insurance and energy costs.
    - TDF and GMA retained. Acknowledged improvement in town centre.
    - Small businesses are suffering already in county towns, so cases by case basis should be considered. Suggest a double rate should be looked at.
    - Welcomed continued support for LEOs.
    - They said rates should be based on company profits, not on the size of the premises.
    - Rates review is needed.
    - Businesses seem to be main focus of Budget.
    - Members asked if the Council would consider a small business rate relief, for businesses under a certain turnover.
    - Suggested that rates should be kept low if there pay parking in place in an area.
    - Welcomed funding for Community Groups – LCDCs and CDI and asked for clarification.

- Must be acknowledge that may smaller businesses are suffering.
- They said a lot of these businesses are seeing a decline in turnover.
- While the rates have gone up, the turnover is down by 30% to 50%
- They stated a lot of small business owners have not had a wage increase for years
- Members said these businesses create employment.
- They stated some of the larger, more profitable businesses can absorb increases but feel that smaller businesses are not generating the profits necessary to cover a rates increase.
- Members need to come up with new ideas as to how to raise income
- Members commended the improvements in town centres since Covid.
- Members said they appreciate the huge challenges that the Council has to meet and the costs of services.
- The Council has supported businesses all along and fear the rate increase will give a negative image.
- Equalisation has had an impact on businesses.

▪ ***Division E – Environmental Services***

- Welcomed funding for Burial Grounds.
- Appreciate funding for Climate and Environment work and the fact that it is across county activities.
- Welcomed increased proposals on litter control.
- Funding towards the environment and climate issues.
- Acknowledged that the Tidy Towns Committees do great works with the funding provided by the Council.

**Extension of Time**

*Proposed: Mary Linehan Foley*

*Seconded: Alan Coleman*

**The Chief Executive responded as follows:**

He outlined the context of the proposed rates increase and stated that there had been a massive commitment to business supports and town centres by the Council. No extra burden was placed by the Council on towns over the last 13 years and businesses grew. Economy advanced in the towns. Burdens increased on the Council but was not transferred back on the businesses. Acknowledged that the increase in rates is difficult for Members but stated that a business never had to close over non-payment of rates. There is a strong relationship between the Council and its rate payers. The level of payment by businesses is at 92 % – 94%. Any businesses in difficulty because of rates can talk to the Council rates staff. 134,000 householders paid the LPT when it was increased to 7.5%, however there was no increase in rates for 12,600 rate payers in 13 years. The Council is facing inflation costs but this will not be passed on to the businesses. Business support schemes are not necessary as there is support given by the Council on the ground. There will be huge support in towns for Christmas in the coming weeks.

He stated there is not an adequate level of time and insight to agree supports for a Rates Rebate. Some businesses are soaring. He said there is an Economic Development Fund already in place and this could be looked at to give further support. Support for start-ups to be looked at.

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

- Ms. Lynch said Budget 2022 has been drafted on the assumption that there will be an income of €1m from pay parking. There is no guarantee in terms of income support from government or how the pandemic will play out next year. If pay parking is not resumed, there may have to be adjustments made to the Budget during the year
- Stated the decision on rates has not been taken lightly. It was taken into account that there had not been an increase in 13 years but also that there was rising inflation, the need to balance the budget and to provide services
- She stated that 68% of funding is provided through LPT & rates.
- The impact on the rate payer will be limited for the majority. The lowest level of rate payers, will see an increase of €17 per year.
- Ms Lynch confirmed that the Council has a rate collection of between 91% to 93% over the last number of years.
- She stated that were few difficulties collecting the rates. The Council works with rate payers to resolve issues that arise.
- She noted that there had been support from the Government during the pandemic but said this was not expected to continue if the pandemic lasted over a number of years.
- The collection was high even during the pandemic.
- The income from the rates collection can be invested in services on the ground, through the Economic Development Fund and in Reactivating Towns.
- Under the rates legislation there is provision for only one ARV for all properties.
- Confirmed Rates revaluation was due to commence by the Valuation Office in 2021 but has been delayed until 2024 due to the pandemic
- Community Development initiative of €3.5m set aside is still available. The Leader Programme is decided by Government and the Council has no control over it.
- Said that Members were given many opportunities to talk about the Budget and to raise issues during the budget preparation .
- 50% cut initially on the table for GMA, TDF and VEF. Delighted that this is now not the case.
- 9.37% increase in playgrounds funding.
- Welcomed litter control funding.
- Acknowledged that Villages need continuing investment.
- Stated there was increased funding for Burial Grounds in the Budget
- There is a commitment to review the number of outdoor staff and increase them by between 10 – 14 in 2022. She stated that the increase of services is reflective of where the Council sees the need, action and activity of staff, e.g. in street cleaning.
- She stated that the matter of wastewater will be referred to the Engineer's Department.
- Confirmed same Budget applies for Winter Maintenance as previous years.
- She welcomed increase in Voids funding and Planned Maintenance funding. Housing stock maintenance very important.
- Said that there is no reduction on the amount for unfinished housing estates, there was a reallocation of pay to other cost headings.
- Stated there was no reduction in the Mobility Aid Grant.
- The issue of Traffic Calming measures will have to go back to the Director of Services of Roads and Transportation.

The Mayor asked if the Economic Development Section could work with rates hardship cases. She requested that contacts and supports be put in place for businesses.

**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 2022.

**RESOLUTION 1:**

**ADOPTION OF THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET FOR THE LOCAL FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

Proposed by Councillor Alan Coleman, seconded by Councillor James Kennedy

“That pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014 and the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations, the Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 as presented by the Chief Executive and as set out in Tables A – F, and is hereby adopted.”

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

**FOR:** Councillors Coughlan, Coleman, Murphy Kevin, O'Sullivan J, O'Sullivan M, Collins D, Murphy PG, McGrath, D'Alton, Murtagh, Buckley, White, O'Callaghan, Rasmussen, O'Connor S, O'Connor A, O'Flynn, O'Leary, Dawson, Doyle, O'Shea JP, Creed, Moynihan G, Looney, Coughlan M, Lynch, Hayes Pat, Murphy Gearóid, Kennedy, Madden, O'Shea T, Quaide, Kelly, Carroll, Hayes Paul. [35]

**AGAINST:** Dalton O'Sullivan, Roche, Coakley [3]

**ABSTAIN:** Sheppard, Murphy Gerard, Linehan-Foley, Ahern, Twomey [5]

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 2022**

Proposed by Councillor Alan Coleman, seconded by Councillor Frank O'Flynn

“That pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014 and the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations, and in accordance with the Local Authority Budget for the Financial Year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022, 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 **76.99**.”

**FOR:** Councillors Coughlan, Coleman, Murphy Kevin, O'Sullivan J, O'Sullivan M, Murphy PG, McGrath, D'Alton, Murtagh, Buckley, White, O'Callaghan, Rasmussen, O'Connor S, O'Connor A, O'Flynn, O'Leary, Dawson, Doyle, O'Shea JP, Creed, Moynihan G, Looney, Coughlan M, Lynch, Murphy Gearóid, Kennedy, Madden, O'Shea T, Kelly, Carroll, Hayes Paul. [32]

**AGAINST:** Collins D, Dalton O’Sullivan, Roche, Coakley [4]

**ABSTAIN:** Sheppard, Murphy Gerard, Hayes Pat, Linehan–Foley, Ahern, Twomey [6]

The Mayor declared the resolution carried.

### **RESOLUTION 3**

#### **RATES VACANCY REFUND**

Proposed by Councillor Frank O’Flynn, seconded by Councillor Cathal Rasmussen

“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 2022.”

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

**FOR:** Councillors Coughlan, Coleman, Murphy Kevin, O’Sullivan J, O’Sullivan M, Collins D, Murphy PG, McGrath, D’Alton, Murtagh, Buckley, White, Dalton O’Sullivan, O’Callaghan, Sheppard, Rasmussen, O’Connor S, O’Connor A, O’Flynn, O’Leary, Dawson, Roche, Doyle, O’Shea JP, Murphy Gerard, Creed, Moynihan G, Looney, Coughlan M, Lynch, Hayes Pat, Murphy Gearóid, Kennedy, Madden, O’Shea T, Linehan–Foley, Ahern, Twomey, Kelly, Carroll, Coakley, Hayes Paul. [42]

**AGAINST:** [0]

**ABSTAIN:** [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 2022 Budget. She also thanked the Chief Executive and all Members for their engagement with the process of finalising the 2022 Budget.

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