

Kildare County Council
Minutes of Budget Meeting
held at 3.00pm on
Monday, 21 November 2022
in Council Chamber
Aras Chill Dara

Members Present: Councillor F Brett, (Cathaoirleach), Councillors V Behan, A Breen, A Breslin, B Caldwell, B Clear, M Coleman, A Connolly, N Connolly, Í Cussen, S Doyle, T Durkan, A Farrelly, A Feeney, D Fitzpatrick, C Galvin, P Hamilton, N Heavey, I Keatley, C Kelly, C Kenny, N Killeen, M. Leigh, V Liston, P McEvoy, S Moore, J Neville, N Ó Cearúil, T O'Dwyer, P O'Dwyer. C Pender, R Power, E Sammon, M Stafford, P Ward, B Weld and B Wyse.

Attending

Remotely: Councillors , B Dooley, K Duffy, F McLoughlin Healy,

Also Present: Ms S Kavanagh (Chief Executive), Ms F Millane, (A/Head of Finance), Ms B Sweeney (Financial Accountant) Mr J Boland, Ms E Wright, Mr E Ryan, Ms A Aspell (Directors of Services), Ms M Higgins, A/Director of Service, Ms C O'Grady (Meetings Administrator) and Mr J Hannigan (Meetings Secretary).

BM01/2022

Consideration of Budget

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the members to the Budget meeting.

As due notice of the meeting and of the preparation of the budget had been given as required by law, the council considered the draft budget for the year ending 31 December 2023.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the members who attended the online briefing on the 14 November 2022 and invited Ms. Kavanagh, Chief Executive to introduce the draft Budget 2023 and Ms. Millane to then present it to the members.

Ms Kavanagh thanked the Cathaoirleach and the elected members for their ongoing co-operation and collaboration. She noted that they were coming to the end of another difficult year for elected members, for businesses and for communities. She hoped that we can move forward in 2023 with this positive 199 million euro revenue budget and focus on the continued delivery of quality services and also the delivery of a very significant 764 million euro 3-year capital programme

She thanked Fiona Millane, Barbara Sweeney and the team in Finance for both the revenue budget and the capital programme. She noted that as members were aware the budgeting process started many months ago and it was a relief to be in a position to bring the members a draft balanced budget for 2023.

She took the opportunity to thank Management Team for their input into the budget process so far and for their continued hard work and support. She said that the organisation has seen significant change over the last year and this will continue into 2023, but despite the level of change there has been a continued commitment to the delivery of essential services for the people of Kildare.

There were a number of key areas that she addressed before handing over to Ms Millane to go through the draft budget in more detail.

LPT – She commended the members on their earlier decision to retain the 10% variation in the Local Property Tax. She advised that the executive has taken onboard the request to inform the homeowners of Kildare about the benefits being derived from the distribution of LPT locally, for local priorities and that the communications team are working on this at the moment.

On the issue of commercial rates. 61% of Kildare County Council's income comes from local sources. As the members are probably aware most commercial rates customers will not have experienced any increase in their rates for the past 14 years. As part of the budgetary process last year, the council flagged that there would need to be some level of increase in commercial rates in 2023. In this regard and in order

to produce a balanced budget and deliver on the commitments made in respect of the services and projects to be delivered in 2023, a 1% increase has been included in the draft budget before the members. The decision to include this minimal increase was not taken lightly but it will ensure targeted services are provided with additional funding and supports.

The last aspect she referenced before handing over was financial resilience. Kildare County Council's financial resilience is enhanced if buffers or provisions are built up to help the organisation to cope with sudden economic down turns. The members will recall that in previous years it was necessary to reduce transfers to certain funds or provisions, for example the Public Lighting Upgrade fund or the provision for Burial Ground, and in previous years, there were also some reductions in spend to front line services.

In 2023 the council do not propose any further erosion of these funds or provisions. It would like to be in a position to start reimbursing these provisions at the first available opportunity. It was felt that this is financially prudent as the reserves created are the primary local source of funding for these projects

Ms Millane then proceeded to take members through the budget process and informed the meeting that the budget had been prepared in Draft statutory format in accordance with S102 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, She explained that the process of preparing the Budget involved a number of stages including the consideration by CPG of the broad parameters of the budget (this was done at both the September and October CPG meetings) and the Finance Committee, followed by a detailed review of income and expenditure headings by Management Team. The decision to retain the Local Property Tax rate was made in September and the draft budgetary plans were discussed at each of the MD meetings in October.

She informed the members that they will be asked to adopt the budget with or without amendment and that a number of reserved functions were required to be determined at the budget meeting including:

- The adoption of the budget by resolution (with or without amendment)
- The determination of the Annual Rate on Valuation
- Approval of the vacancy refund rate

- Noting of the 3 year capital programme.

She explained for 2023 there are some changes to the budgets from 2022. – the key changes are:

Increases in costs:

Funded increases:

- Housing maintenance – it is expected that rents will increase by approximately €1.5m – all this increase is being ringfenced into Housing, primarily into Housing maintenance
- Housing leasing – leasing has grown exponentially, while at the same time RAS has decreased – the net increase is approximately €9m
- Payroll – the retrospective increases plus the planned national agreement changes are fully funded – these amount to approximately 6.5% of pay and pension costs
- There a number of new funded positions – for example: the Bio-diversity Officer, Town Centre First, Housing for All, Community Climate Action Officers, the Assistant Civil Defence Officer, some additional Public Realm team members
- Roads grants have increased by approximately €1.2m – there are variations across categories
- There are new and increased headings in Community
- Energy

She discussed the specific additional expenditure areas that will be funded through a combination of the proposed 1% increase in rates, the increase in LPT through additional units being added to the tax net and the 10% overhead deducted from the MDs retained LPT.

She explained that there were changes to income:

Rental Income increased by €1.5m

Grants	Increased by approximately €19m – and includes roads grants, SICAP and Leader increases, community grants, FEMPI and energy
Pay Parking	This was discussed at the MD meetings in October
LPT Income	change relates to additional units being included for LPT in 2022

She explained that as flagged at budget time last year the council has included a small increase in Rates. This was initially at 2.5% - however a combination of some rates valuations coming in, in the past couple of weeks, together with confirmation that 100% of FEMPI would be recouped has enabled the council to reduce the increase to just 1%. Effectively 86.5% of rates customers will have an increase of less than €100 per annum or €2 per week – the top 13.5% of customers account for over €480k of the increase. The total income generated will be about €560,000.

She said that the members should note that as a consequence of reducing the increase, some of the spend areas highlighted with the Finance Committee are not now getting an increase but these will be prioritised as and when additional income becomes available.

She explained that the budget book provided to members is divided into a number of sections

Section 1

1. The report of the Chief Executive – this report provides the context for the figures in the budget.
2. The report of the departments
3. The 'Key Features' (Blue pages) – historically Council looked for more detail (for some figures) than that provided in the statutory budget. As there is no provision to amend the format or detail of the statutory budget, some additional detail is provided here.

Section 2

4. The actual statutory budget (pages T1 to T29) – this comprises statutory and explanatory tables which Council (with or without amendment) shall adopt.

Section 3

5. The Capital Programme 2023-2025. This report was for noting.

The format of the budgetary tables is prescribed under the Accounting Code of Practice.

She then explained the statutory tables comprised of the following :

- a) **Table A – (page T1)** This is a high level summary of the draft budget by Division (divisions are Housing/B Roads/C Water Services/etc). The key figure that requires attention is the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) which Council adopts. For 2023 it is proposed to have an ARV of .2268 (in 2022 this was .2246).

Table A shows that the budgeted expenditure for 2023 is €199m, spread across the 8 divisions.

Income from Goods & Services and Grants amounts to €116,772,413.

LPT Income is €19,283,322 (this includes the variation that was maintained from 2022 and which is directed for use by the MDs (but doesn't include the €6,194,481 that we have been instructed to use in Housing as 'self funding' of expenditure that would previously have been grant funded) – in 2022 this self-funding was €1.3m.

- b) **Table B (pages T2 and T3)** are slightly more detailed breakdown of income and expenditure following Table A

It was not proposed to go through these in detail as they are detailed further in Table F –however it was noted that the service division totals link back to the summary on Table A

- c) **Tables D & E (T5 & T6)** – these provide a breakdown of income excluding LPT and Rates. The income on these two tables combine for 2022 to the €116.7m which was noted is the total income showing on Table A.

Goods & Services were estimated at €39,868,116.

- a. The major change here relates to the increase in Rents which is budgeted as increasing by €1.5m.
- b. Other changes include parking (discussed in October MDs) increasing – the landfill levy (in other income) decreasing by €1m – Drenth increasing by €100k – and a number of other small changes

She explained the key breakdown and assumptions

Grants & Subsidies are estimated at €76,904,297 (Table E grants and subsidies is split by source department – so €56.6m comes from the parent department, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, with the balance coming from other departments, primarily Department of Transport DoT)

As per the Chief Executive's report, 61% of income is locally generated – ie Rates, LPT and Goods & Services.

She explained how Table F gives a somewhat more detailed breakdown at what is referred to as 'sub-service' level within each Division.

Out-turn for 2023 is showing as the same as budget for 2022 with a small few exceptions – this is because at the time we are working through the budgets, we are aware that the income and expenditure is running similar to budget, as reported on to Council in the monthly and quarterly reports, with the exceptions of recoupable areas such as Roads Grants (where the grants allocated were higher than budgeted), Community Grants (incl Ukraine Crisis Costs– contra), etc. The actual out-turn will be provided in the New Year once the Annual Financial Statements are completed.

Service support costs appear on the budget – these are primarily the reallocation of the Central Management Charge (Appendix 1 pge T29). Central Management is the cost of the support services – so the cost of the building, insurance, pensions, cost of Corporate Services, HR, Finance, IT etc – the reallocation is done under national rules – so for example Finance is

recharged based on the number of transactions, while the building is reallocated based on square footage etc.

Budgets have increased from 2023. In the main, these are where there were increases to grants in 2022 and we have assumed that these increases will be maintained into 2023. If they aren't, expenditure will be adjusted to match. We are still hopeful of a 'bounce' in LPT from the baseline review that is due in the next few months - but we need the Members to continue to lobby government on behalf of Kildare.

The increased allocations in this draft while positive and welcome, are still lower than the Executive would like. Kildare has seen an increase in population of 11% between 2016 and 2022's censuses – yet the increase in LPT (before any variation) was just €600,000.

She explained the breakdown and assumptions in **Housing (T7 – T9)** that some key increases are being financed through an increase in rental income. This increase in income is as a direct result of the increases in numbers of units, but also is reflective of the fact that most tenants are back to regular earnings instead of the PUP and other Covid supports:

- There is an increase in Housing maintenance of €2.4m. This is a combination of an increase in response and planned maintenance, increases to LPT payable and some small increases in payroll. It also includes the increased costs associated with insurance repairs (which are funded) and energy efficiency works (which we hope will be funded) and voids (which are funded).
- There is a small increase to the Housing assessment and allocations team in A02
- A0301 includes increased provisions to cater for rent assessments and collections
- A0403 includes provision for the full year for having the 5 community workers to provide support to communities and tenants of Kildare.

- A05 Homelessness (which is partially recoupable) is expected to increase further so we have provided for an increase of €127k gross – this is partially recoupable
- A061 now includes the new Housing for All team which is funded and which is budgeted at approximately €1m
- A07 RAS/ Social Housing Initiatives – there is significant uptake in social leasing and the budgets are proposed to increase from €12.4m to €24.4m, with matching increases to income. There are also reductions in the numbers being housed through RAS – this is reflected in the budgets.
- In Budget 2022 the Members voted to amend the budget and transfer €237k from the Tenant Support Scheme to HAGs – this was for one year, so the monies have been returned to the Tenant Support Scheme which is included in A0101 Housing Maintenance

She explained the breakdown and assumptions in **Roads (T10-T12)**

Most of the changes to Roads budgets relate to grant aided works. The council have not yet been advised of the roads' grants for 2023 – these are usually advised in quarter 1 of the year. As such, Roads will come back to each of the MDs in Quarter 1 (generally the March meeting) with the Road Works programme for 2023 which will reflect the actual grants received – for the moment we are estimating based on the grants received in 2022.

- Local Roads General Maintenance (B0405), KCC funded element has been increased by €327k, plus there is an additional estimated €169k of energy costs (which are to be funded)
- Public Lighting –Kildare County Council has been providing for this project for some years, and Members will recall that the annual provision reduced in 2021 as part of the reductions that had to be made to balance the budget. Work in Kildare is expected to commence in Q2 2023. The proposed costs are higher than previously estimated, but the long-term benefits cannot be overstated. Should more funding become available, we would recommend that some be transferred to increase the provision on hand.

- Pay-parking has been discussed as part of the MD meetings in October and the figures included in the budget are those that were brought to the MDs at that time.

She explained that **Water Services (T13 – T14)** are operated under an SLA with Irish Water – the costs under the SLA are fully recoupable.

C05 the cost of Group Water Schemes is not included in the SLA but the direct costs are recoupable.

She explained how **Development Management (T15-T17)** was broken down

D0101 - For information the non-payroll cost of statutory plans is estimated on a 5 year cycle which is reviewed based on number of plans etc every couple of years.

D0201 – The 2022 budget provided for additional resources in Development Management –This has been retained for 2023

D0404 has been reduced by €40k as the URBACT scheme is no longer in place – this was a contra so has a matched reduction in income

D0601 – There are contra (ie fully recoupable) increases here, specifically in Social Enterprise Grant, LGBTI, Communities Activities Fund and Empowering Communities Fund.

D0602 has been reduced as the RAPID scheme is no longer in place. The staff resource that was previously charged here is now assigned to Communities General (D0601)

D0603 – both Leader and SICAP (both of which are funded) are expected to increase in activity over the coming years, so both budgets have been increased to €1.5m. In addition the Ukrainian Crisis costs are included under Social Inclusion (D0603)

D0901 Town Centre First has been included under D0901 Urban and Village renewal – this is a contra item.

D0902 – as requested there is a small increase of €10k towards Twinning.

D0905 Economic Development – the increase here reflects an increased provision for staff in the public realm team (both funded and KCC funded). We have also provided a small increase towards the Thoroughbred Country (20k) here. In addition there are 2 new provisions included – one towards Business Parks upgrades and one towards creating a fund to enable us to acquire strategic property (100k each). In addition an extra allocation has been included under Economic Development towards the diaspora strategy (24k)

D0906 Local Enterprise Office– most of LEO costs are recoupable from Enterprise Ireland.

D1101 Heritage – this budget line includes a provision towards the Bio-diversity Officer (which is funded on a reducing basis) and a small increase (as requested) towards Dun Ailinne

She asked the members to note that there is an increase of over €2.1m in government grants (on page T17) which relate directly to many of the increases already referred to in this division

She explained the key areas in **Environmental Services (T18-T20)**

E01 – the increase here reflects the increase in energy costs which are budgeted as being fully funded

E0701 – The levy is a contra item and has been reducing over the past couple of years.

E1001 Civil Defence is part funded through the Dept of Defence – the increase for 2023 reflects the recruitment of an assistant civil defence officer

E1004 – the decrease in derelict sites is due to a reallocation of staff

E11/E12 – refers to the Fire Services – there is a small increase overall here

E1501 Climate Change –For 2023 we have budgeted to increase the staff complement by 2 plus we have provided an additional €100k towards delivery of actions. As a CARO lead it is important that we lead the way on this area

The Department has also advised that they will fund two community climate action posts (which are provided)

The balance refers to the Climate Action regional Office which is funded.

She explained the key breakdown and assumptions in **Recreation and Amenity (T21 – T22)**

F0201 Libraries – the increase relates to a) 182k of increased energy costs and b) 300k towards Naas library. This is an area we expect to see further increases in over the coming years as the County Library, Clane Library and Celbridge Library come on stream.

F0301 Parks & Open Spaces – An increased provision towards Oak Park, Oldtown Demesne, Kerdiffstown and Sallins is included here, as is €10k towards a Blue Plaque Scheme as requested. In addition we have budgeted for an additional 7 staff within Parks and recreation – these positions will complement the Public Realm Team and enable delivery of capital and LPT projects, in addition to maintaining the extra parks that are being delivered.

F0403 Community Facilities – €100k of the increase here is matched by 100% funding – Drehid Community Fund. The balance relates to the community centres (including the new Bawnogues centre)– there is also an expected small increase in income here.

F0404 Recreational Development – the increases here are due to the work programme of Sports Partnership and this is fully recoupable

F0501 - €54k of the increase in Arts relates to the Creative Ireland Programme which is recoupable. There is also a small increase relating to the Arts Officer's projects(1k)

F0502 – As indicated at the MD meetings in October – we have provided for an increased subvention to the Arts Centre to assist with their increased costs.

F0509 – Bridget 1500 - Bridget 1500 is a major opportunity for Kildare from a tourism and economic perspective. We effectively get one opportunity to do

this and do it right, and to this end we have included a provision that we hope we can increase in time

She explained the breakdown of **Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare (T23-T24)**

G0101 Land Drainage – most of the work done by this team is Capital and therefore capital funded – however some work relates to the ongoing river drainage maintenance (formerly done by specific boards – eg Barrow drainage board/ Lerr drainage board/etc) The increases here relate to staff reallocation from codes within the Environment Section

She explained the breakdown of **Miscellaneous Services (T25-T27)**

H0303 - Refunds and Irrecoverable rates reflects the level of irrecoverable rates in 2021 plus/minus anything that we are aware of in 2022.

H0401 - Register of elector costs – this reflects the allocation of staff costs

H0501 – Coroners are a ‘demand’ and must be paid – the increase reflects the current actuals.

H0702 – Casual Trading – the bye laws that were adopted need to now be implemented. In addition, it is expected that there will be a small net cost for the Potato Market in Naas in 2023, however current estimates show this breaking even within two to three years

H0901 – Representational Payments – it was noted that Moorhead, which was funded in 2022, is not being funded in 2023.

H0909 – represents a combination of retained LPT and pay parking to be spent at the direction of the Members - these figures were agreed at the MD meetings in October

Government Grants on T27 have increased by €5m which is the FEMPI (financial measures in the public interest) recoupment and the recoupment of energy costs.

She explained the breakdown of **Central Management Charge (T28)**

Corporate Buildings – the increase here is based on energy costs

Corporate Services have increased due to :

- Expansion of the Executive team
- Advertising requirements through the Irish language (20% of advertising to be through Irish; 5% in Irish language periodicals)
- The appointment of an Irish Language Officer
- An increase in staffing in the procurement team
- Changes to Access to information team – specifically the appointment of a specialist DPO

HR – increase in order to deliver a cohesive Work Force Plan

She re-iterated what she said in the briefing last week. She believed this to be a very positive budget. The executive had listened to the councillors over the past year and directed additional financial resources toward areas such as Parks and Recreation, Public Realm, Brigid 1500, Climate Action/Energy Efficiency, etc in order that the council can deliver on key priority areas, whilst acknowledging that there is more to be done in these and other areas.

The Cathaoirleach with the agreement of the members proposed to adjourn for 5 minutes following which on the proposal of Councillor O’Cearúil seconded by Councillor Keatley it was agreed to proceed to deal with submissions and motions submitted in advance of the meeting and on which reports had issued.

BM02/2022

Motion Cllr Moore

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor S Moore. That members agree the practice of giving 95% of Annual Budget Time to discussions on Revenue Expenditure/Income and only 5% to Capital Expenditure/Income should be discontinued, in favour of a more equitable allocation of time, allowing members to have input on both MD and County level Capital Expenditure discussions.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Killeen

A report was received from the Finance department advising that at the Statutory Budget Meeting, the members are asked to make the following decisions:

- Adopt Budget 2023 with or without amendment.
- Determine the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV).
- Approve the vacancy refund rate.
- Note the 3-year Capital Programme 2023 – 2025

The Revenue Budget guides the operational spend of the Council for the coming year. The 3-year Capital Programme, on the other hand, is subject to change and often subject to government grants. The Members have been encouraged to discuss the Capital Programme with the relevant directors at the MD meetings in May/June. Should the Members wish for an additional meeting to discuss the Capital Programme this can, of course, be facilitated, but it should not impact on the Revenue Budget discussions which must be resolved within the prescribed period.

Councillor Moore thought that it was not fair that the members were asked to skip quickly through the capital part of the budget programme.

Ms Kavanagh informed the meeting that she was conscious that a full discussion on the capital program for each municipal district should take place at least once a year

and she understood that this was happening and will happen at MD level next year. If that is not working she will review.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Moore seconded by Councillor Killeen and agreed by all present that that the report be noted.

BM03/2022

Councillor Moore informed the meeting that he wished to defer the following motions.

Motion Cllr. Moore

That the percentages apportionment of Development Levies from both Housing and non-Housing be changed to include a new 5% minimum for Economic/Enterprise Development Fund, rather than transferring it from the Community Development Fund as it presently operates.

Motion Cllr. Moore

That members agree the Practice of Executives unilaterally making submissions for National Grants, where successful applications carry a 'matching' funds requirement and thereafter expecting Elected Members to allocate the 'matching' fund from the 'Community Focussed' LPT Variation, without prior discussion, be discontinued as bad management.

Motion Cllr. Moore

That members agree to re-examine the methodology of the distribution of the LPT Collected under the Adjustment Factor Variation, as Naas MD is disproportionately treated in both the '50% to each MD' dividend and '50% by way of Elected Member Numbers' as the main town of Naas MD, Naas, as the capital town carries a much higher population than other main MD towns and Naas MD is under-represented by two members for its population level.

This was agreed by the members present.

BM04/2022

Motion Cllr. Durkan

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Tim Durkan. That all unspent Local Property Tax monies, plus pay parking surpluses, are retained and rolled over within their respective municipal districts.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Durkan and seconded by Councillor Feeney.

A report was received from the Finance Department advising the members that this was a matter for them to decide

Councillor Cussen informed the meeting that some municipal districts had a deficit in pay parking and she could not support the second part of the motion, as deficits should not be carried forward. She was advised that it was only surpluses that were being carried forward.

With 39 voting in favour and one against the motion was carried

Resolved that all unspent Local Property Tax monies, plus pay parking surpluses, are retained and rolled over within their respective municipal districts.

BM05/2022

Motion from Finance Committee Members

The members considered the following motion in the name of the Finance Committee, Councillor Kevin Duffy, Councillor Joe Neville, Councillor Angela Feeney, Councillor Ivan Keatley and Councillor Carmel Kelly.

The Finance Committee noted that the historical deficit for Kildare County Council has been addressed. The Committee, therefore, proposes that similar to the carry forward of unspent LPT, if any unspent budget monies result in a surplus, the accumulated surplus should not be allowed to exceed €50,000, and in turn, that any excess is transferred to the Strategic Property Fund. The Finance Committee believes that such a fund needs to be financed in order that the Council will be in funds to create landbanks in strategic locations.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Duffy and seconded by the Councillor Neville.

A report had been received from Ms F Millane A/Head of Finance informing the meeting that this was a matter for the members to agree

As Councillor Duffy was attending remotely, he asked that Councillor Neville speak on behalf of the committee

Councillor Neville informed the meeting that setting up a fund like this would allow the council to use this accumulated fund to acquire badly needed landbanks in the future. This was a 30 to 40 year plan.

The members raised the following points

Who would determine where the fund would be spent

That unspent development contributions should not be included in this.

A policy needed to be developed to manage such a fund

If the members agreed how long would the decision be binding for

Ms Millane informed the members that if agreed the Finance Committee would draft terms of reference and a policy by 2 Quarter 2023 and that any decision would be for the term of this council.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Kevin Duffy seconded by Councillor Joe Neville and agreed by all present that similar to the carry forward of unspent LPT, if any unspent budget monies result in a surplus, the accumulated surplus should not be allowed to exceed €50,000, and in turn, that any excess is transferred to the Strategic Property Fund and that the Finance Committee draft terms of reference and a policy for the approval of the members.

BM06/2022

Motion Cllr. A. Connolly

The members considered the following motion in the name of Councillor Anne Connolly. That the Capital Programme include the provision of a Sports Hub in Rathangan.

This was proposed by Councillor A Connolly and seconded by Councillor Behan

A report was received from the Economic Dev, Enterprise, Community & Culture Directorate informing the members that the capital expenditure item 'Sports Hub in Rathangan' had been noted and this proposed project could be discussed further at the May / June Municipal District meetings with Elected Members regarding the Capital Programme.

Councillor A Connolly accepted the report and looked forward to the discussion

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor A Connolly and seconded by Councillor Behan and agreed by all that the report be noted

BM07/2022

Motion Cllrs, Cussen, P. O'Dwyer, Feeney, Durkan, Coleman and Caldwell, B. Clear and C. Kelly.

The following motion was considered in the names of Councillor Íde Cussen, Cllr. Peggy O Dwyer, Cllr. Angela Feeney. Cllr. Tim Durkan, Cllr. Michael Coleman and Cllr. Bernard Caldwell. That provision for funding for administrative support for County Kildare Access Network (CKAN) be considered to assist CKAN with it's workload.

Councillor Cussen proposed the motion and informed the meeting that Councillor Clear and Councillor Kelly's names should have been included in the motion.

Councillor Caldwell seconded the motion

A report from Roads Transport and Public Safety Department informed the members that the council will examine the provision of a level of administrative support in consultation with the HR Department in the context of workforce planning in 2023.

Councillor Cussen welcomed the report.

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Cussen and seconded by Councillor Caldwell that the report be noted

The Cathaoirleach with the agreement of the members adjourned the meeting for 5 Minutes to allow members submit motions from the floor

BM08/2022

Motion Cllr. A. Breslin on behalf of the Labour Group

The Meetings Administrator read the following motion which was submitted by Councillor A. Breslin on behalf of the Labour Group. That the Council transfer €177,325 from A01101(Maintenance of LA. Housing Units) to A0901(Housing Adaptation Grants)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Breslin and seconded by Councillor Feeney

The members were informed that if this was agreed it would allow the council to seek matched funding of up to 80% from the Department

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Breslin seconded by Councillor Feeney and agreed by all members present that the Council transfer €177,325 from A01101(Maintenance of LA Housing Units) to A0901(Housing Adaptation Grant)

BM09/2022

Motion Cllr. R. Power

The Meetings Administrator read the following motion which was submitted by Councillor R Power

That the council increase the commercial rates levy by 3% and that the additional income be attributed as follows:

- 1% as set out in the current draft
- 1% Energy support grant to be distributed as follows:
 - €100 grant to all up to date rate payers on application through a simple online form (Total cost €502,000). Should any of this some not be claimed by mid-2023 the remainder would be sent to community to fund similar grants for community organisations.
 - €58,000 to support admin of the above grants.
- 1% to a new Economic Development fund

The motion was seconded by Councillor Doyle.

Councillor Power informed the meeting that this was a difficult time for businesses. He informed the meeting that the council had not increased their rates for 14 years and was seeking to find the middle ground.

If accepted this motion would generate €1.68 million in total, 1% of which should be distributed as per the budget and 1% to be used to set up a fund as an incentive for businesses to save energy

Businesses would apply using an online application to claim €100 grant to be used to offset energy costs. The remaining 1% would be used for a separate economic fund similar to a system used in Cork. This fund would be used by the Local Enterprise Office in consultation with the Executive. He believed that 55% of the businesses would not have an increase in their rates

The members raised the following points.

Would a rate paying member have to exclude themselves from the decision making process?

How would businesses apply for the Energy grant?

Should the council not try and improve its collection rate of unpaid rates?

It was unfair to businesses that were paying their rates, the council should target those who weren't paying rates

This was an innovative idea that encouraged energy saving.

More time was needed to consider this motion.

There was need for more detail on how this scheme would operate.

Because of equalisation rate payers had not had an increase in rates for 14 years

Ms Kavanagh welcomed the idea and informed the members the 3% increase would address areas of energy conservation, Economic Development. The council would do more if it had additional funds.

Ms Millane informed the meeting that the level of unpaid rates is not unreasonable relative to other local authorities.

The rate of collection was impacted by waivers e.g TD's offices, HSE properties and those who had appealed their rates demand and the council were awaiting the outcome of these appeals. It is also impacted by accounts that pay by direct debit / standing order, where the businesses have restarted payments post Covid.

Councillor Stafford informed the meeting that councillors who were rate payers should disclose the fact and they could then decide to withdraw.

The Cathaoirleach put the motion to the members, that the council increase the commercial rates levy by 3% and that the additional income be attributed as follows:

- 1% as set out in the current draft
- 1% Energy support grant to be distributed as follows:
 - €100 grant to all up to date rate payers on application through a simple online form (Total cost €502,000). Should any of this some not be claimed by mid-2023 the remainder would be sent to community to fund similar grants for community organisations.
 - €58,000 to support admin of the above grants.
- 1% to a new Economic Development fund

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Power seconded by Councillor Doyle and with 15 members voting in favour, 18 members voting against and 6 members abstaining the motion was defeated

BM10/2022

Question Cllr. McEvoy

The members consider the following question from Councillor McEvoy. What total funding did Kildare County Council issue to County Kildare Fáilte (t/a "Into Kildare") and separately to the Environment Section for derelict sites work in 2020, 2021, 2022, and what corresponding amounts are provided for in the draft 2023 budget?

He noted Kildare Fáilte's 2021 Accounts and the 2021 Annual Return page10 that indicates an increasing "cash" surpluses of around €400k.

In his question Councillor McEvoy stated that he was confident that County Kildare Fáilte has strong governance structures and was doing appropriate work. He was of the view that it is important that tourism product development, including "Brigid 1500" is resourced as a priority over subsidising cash reserves to significant levels in County Kildare Fáilte.

A report was received from Economic Development, Enterprise, Community & Culture Directorate giving details of funding provided to Kildare Fáilte by Kildare County Council since 2020: The core funding allocated to Kildare Fáilte for the past number of years has been 350,000. There have also been arrangements made with the members for certain work or activities to be carried out by Kildare Failte and LPT allocated accordingly

2020: €405,809

2021: €514,034

2022: €524,325

2023 Projected: €350,000

The above amounts included funding for various initiatives including annual contribution towards core activities, Thoroughbred Country, LPT projects such as for the Shackleton Museum, tourism packs, Lighting up of Kildare and Taste of Kildare (LEO).

As indicated in the 2021 Annual Return there is a surplus shown of €402,990. Kildare County Council's nominated directors are conscious of this and have raised this as an issue that needs to be addressed by Kildare Failte. It has been indicated that the funds have been earmarked for appropriate work or projects in 2023 and this can be discussed further with Kildare Failte when they attend the Council meeting early in 2023 to discuss their work programme. Should Elected Members approve the 2023 funding, it can be a condition that the expenditure of the surplus is committed fully to the delivery of the tourism programme, prior to the release of the 2023 allocation. 'Brigid 1500' is a priority for Kildare County Council and this programme will be a core element of Into Kildare's work schedule.

A report was received from Water, Environment and Climate Action Directorate informing the members that the amounts budgeted for Derelict Sites are as follows

2020	€215,000
2021	€279,255
2022	€414,275
2023	€292,275

It was noted that Councillor Doyle had left the meeting as she is a board member of County Kildare Fáilte.

Councillor McEvoy informed the meeting that County Kildare Fáilte was a marketing entity. This was a significant accrual and queried if the council should be funding this cash surplus. Should this funding not be diverted to Brigid 1500. This did not preclude County Kildare Failte from applying to use some of this funding if it were transferred to Brigid 1500.

Motion Councillor Breslin

Councillor Breslin proposed that funding of €147,500 be moved from D0501 to the project code associated with Brigid 1500

This was seconded by Councillor Fitzpatrick

Ms Higgins informed the members that while there was a surplus she had been assured that it would be utilised,

Ms S. Kavanagh informed the meeting that she would have concerns about funding not being used on an annual basis and agreed the funding should be moved to Brigid 1500 fund.

The members raised the following points

The money hadn't been spent due to Covid restrictions but it would be utilised

They had previously asked for details of how funding was being used

Did the council know what the money was being spent on?

The Cathaoirleach informed the members he had attended the Annual Meeting of County Kildare Failte and was very impressed with the quality of those involved with County Kildare Failte

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor Breslin seconded by Councillor Fitzpatrick and agreed by members present with one abstention that €147,500 be transferred from D0501 to the St Brigid's 1500 project

BM11/2022

Motion Cllr. Sammon and Cllr Keatley

The members considered the following motion submitted by Councillor Sammon. That the council remove the 1% increase on commercial rates and that €560,000 be taken from LPT with the understanding that any unexpected income from Government would be put towards the €560,000 and LPT replenished.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Sammon and seconded by Councillor Keatley. Councillor Sammon informed the meeting that this equated to €112,000 per Municipal District. Councillor Keatley pointed out that with the rise in inflation it was a difficult time for business. He was aware of businesses in his municipal district

who had recently seen significant increase in their energy costs and cited an example of a business in Athy who had received a bill for €85,000

The members raised the following points.

Everyone was affected by the current inflation and energy costs

Was it permissible to use LPT funding in this way?

Businesses were struggling to keep the doors open

Some businesses were thriving

The councillors had a duty of care to people who live and do business in Kildare

If the members could not agree the budget, could Section 103(10) be used i.e. rely on last years budget

Ms Kavanagh informed the meeting that it was a difficult time for all. The council had originally asked for a 2.5% increase in commercial rates. This had been reduced to 1%. The members had been very proactive in enabling the LPT proposals to be adopted. She had concerns in relation to staffing costs. The members had three things to vote on. The budget would not be reviewed

Councillor Doyle proposed that the members should vote on the budget as presented with the earlier agreed amendments. Councillor Kevin Duffy seconded this proposal.

The Cathaoirleach called on the members to vote on the draft budget that was before them with the agreed amendments and confirmed that members attending remotely were to vote by way of the hands-up option on Teams.

The Meetings Administrator read the Resolution for the Budget 2023

Adoption of Budget

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor S Doyle, seconded by Councillor Kevin Duffy, with 28 members voting in favour, 9 members voting against and 1 member abstaining, that pursuant to Section 103(7) of the Local Government Act 2001, Kildare County Council do hereby adopt for the financial year ending 31 December

2023 the budget set out in tables A, B, D,E and F of the draft budget with amendments presented to the council and do hereby determine in accordance with the said budget on the proposal of Councillor S Doyle seconded by Councillor K Duffy and agreed by the members, the annual rate on valuation set out in Tables A,B,D,E and F of €0.2268 to be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for that year for the purposes set out in those tables.

Vacancy Relief

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor N Ó Cearúil seconded by Councillor V Liston with 33 members voting in favour, 1 member voting against and 1 member abstaining that this council continue to effect vacant premises relief as outlined in Section 14 of the Local Government Act 1946.

Capital Programme 2023-2025

Resolved on the proposal of Councillor P McEvoy seconded by Councillor A Breslin, and agreed by the members present that the Capital Budget 2023 – 2025 be noted.

The meeting concluded.