

MINUTES OF THE LPT MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY BUILDINGS, WICKLOW ON MONDAY 24th SEPTEMBER 2018, COMMENCING 2PM

PRESENT:

COUNCILLOR P. VANCE, CATHAOIRLEACH, COUNCILLORS T. ANNESLEY, J. BEHAN, V. BLAKE, S. BOURKE, T. CULLEN, S. CULLEN, P. DORAN, G. DUNNE, P. FITZGERALD, T. FORTUNE, C. FOX, M. KAVANAGH, P. KENNEDY, N. LAWLESS, S. MATTHEWS, M. MCDONALD, G. MCLOUGHLIN, D. MITCHELL, D. NOLAN, O.O'BRIEN, D. O'BRIEN, G.O'NEILL, J. RUTTLE, J. RYAN, J. SNELL, B. THORNHILL, E. TIMMINS, G. WALSH, J. WHITMORE AND I. WINTERS.

APOLOGIES:

COUNCILLOR M. MURPHY.

IN ATTENDANCE:

**MR. F. CURRAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
MR. S. QUIRKE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. J. LANE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. T. MURPHY, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. M. NICHOLSON, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. M. GEANEY, A/DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. B. GLEESON, HEAD OF FINANCE
MS. L. GALLAGHER, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR
MS. D. CROMIE, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTANT
MS. B. MCCARTHY, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTANT
MR. D. KEYES, ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
MS. C. FLOOD, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. T. O'BRIEN, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. K. BOYLE, IT SUPPORT
MS. G. LANG, ASSISTANT STAFF OFFICER**

Votes of Sympathy

Elected Members passed a vote of sympathy to the families of the late Mrs. Mary Munnely and Mr. Tony Murphy. A minutes silence was observed for the deceased.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

Cllr. E. Timmins referred to the preparation of the RSES and to the implications for County Wicklow in terms of population projections and zonings. He asked if the matter could be discussed at the October Council meeting. The Cathaoirleach advised that he will facilitate discussion at the Council meeting on 1st of October next.

ITEM NO. 1

To consider the variation of the basic rate of Local Property Tax and the setting of the Local Adjustment Factor in accordance with the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) to apply for the period of one year from the next local property tax liability 1st November, 2018.

Elected members were circulated with:

1. Report of Chief Executive dated 20th September, 2018 to Members on the matters to which Wicklow County Council shall have regard to in the setting of the Local Adjustment Factor from the Chief Executive, Mr. Frank Curran and
2. Circular Fin 04/2018 dated the 19th July, 2018 Re: 'Provisional Local Property Tax Allocation, 2019 – Wicklow County Council'.

The Chief Executive advised of the challenges in relation to the preparation of the budget for 2019 and the limitations and lack of flexibility in relation to income from property tax and commercial

rates. He outlined the additional financial obligations on the Council's revenue budget for 2019 mentioning the national pay restoration agreement, additional pension costs, non contribution of new recruits to the Council's pensions scheme and the loss of income to that area. He advised of the applications to the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and the Enterprise Ireland Regional Competitive fund, advising that if successful will require match funding by the Council. He advised that virtually all Council Departments are seeking an increase in budget some of which are considered essential such as the social housing conditional survey, increase provision for remedial works, central heating, boiler maintenance, energy upgrade, additional graveyard maintenance, extra library staff, library book fund, playgrounds and public lighting, etc. He advised that the Head of Finance would present on the recommendations.

Mr. B. Gleeson Head of Finance gave a presentation on LPT and the setting of the Local Adjustment Factor under the following areas:

- Summary
- 2019 Budget Process
- Local Property Tax
- Provisional 2019 LPT allocations (Fin 04/18)
- LPT Matters to which we must have regard to
- 2019 Budget Challenges
- 2019 Estimation of Income and Expenditure
- 2019 Draft Budget Income and Expenditure
- Draft Budget 2019 Additional costs
- LPT matters to which we much have regard
- LPT Potential Impact on a liable person
- LPT Impact on 2019 Revenue Budget
- LPT – Potential Impact on Existing Service Delivery
- 2019 LPT Rate Variation Recommendation

Elected Members made the following contributions, and raised queries which were responded by the Head of Finance.

- With the abolition of the Urban and Town Councils and reductions in staff at local level the Council is worse off in the delivery of services to the people of County Wicklow.
- While property tax is being paid a resultant improvement in services is not been seen
- Reference made to the cost of clean up for illegal dumping in West Wicklow
- If the LPT is reduced then there will be an impact on services, if the LPT is increased there will be an impact on householders, view expressed that the LPT should not be increased at this point in time.
- View expressed that property tax is necessary and query as to the effect in the different areas of County Wicklow
- Request for a 10% increase not supported.
- View expressed that the tax is unfair and that it discriminates against people who live in counties where house values are high, like County Wicklow.
- View expressed that the equalisation fund is unjust
- View expressed that the property tax should be left at the standard rate and not increased.
- Any proposal that will take €2.5m from the revenue budget will reduce the discretionary funding to the municipal districts.
- Concern expressed at the proposed revaluation of houses in 2019 and the impact that will have.
- Wicklow County Council made a submission to the Department in relation to underfunding in general from the central fund. Has there been a response?
- If income is reduced then the money available to spend on services will be reduced.

Cllr. J. Behan proposed that '*the LPT be reduced by 15%*' which was seconded by Cllr. N. Lawless.

Cllr. O. O'Brien proposed that *'when the vote is taken that the percentage local property tax variation be calculated on the basis of each Councillors vote being given a percentage value'* which was seconded by Cllr. G. O'Neill.

Cllr. C. Fox proposed *'that the LPT remain at the standard rate'* which was seconded by Cllr. E. Timmins.

With regard to the proposal put forward by Cllr. O. O'Brien, seconded by Cllr. Gerry O'Neill, the Cathaoirleach advised that the motion was not valid as it was not in accordance with the provisions of Section 5 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act, 2013 and accordingly could not be taken.

The Cathaoirleach advised that when the LPT was introduced it was understood that it would be additional funding to the local authority and that the Council should raise again the issue of the 20% equalisation fund with the Department. He said that it was unfair to County Wicklow that 20% of the monies raised are spent in other areas around the Country. He referred to the proposal for 2019 and with the increase in property prices, property tax will increase in 2019 and that this could bring significant changes to some parts of the County where property prices are higher. He referred to the up and coming budget process in November and any cut to the LPT will have an impact on services if it is reduced by €2.5m.

The proposal put forward by Cllr J. Behan, seconded by Cllr. N. Lawless: To reduce the basic rate of Local Property tax for the for the period of one year from the next local property tax liability date 1st November 2018 by 15% was put to a vote and following a roll call was defeated by a margin of 10 votes for, 20 against and 2 abstaining viz:-

FOR (10)	CLLRS J. BEHAN, P. DORAN, T. FORTUNE, M. KAVANAGH, N. LAWLESS, M. MCDONALD, O. O'BRIEN, D. O'BRIEN, G. O'NEILL AND B. THORNHILL
AGAINST (20)	CLLRS T. ANNESLEY, V. BLAKE, S. BOURKE, T. CULLEN, S. CULLEN, G. DUNNE, P. FITZGERALD, C. FOX, P. KENNEDY, S. MATTHEWS, G. MCDLOUGHLIN, D. MITCHELL, D. NOLAN, J. RUTTLE, J. RYAN, E. TIMMINS, P. VANCE, G. WALSH, J. WHITMORE AND I. WINTERS.
NOT PRESENT (2)	CLLRS. M. MURPHY AND J. SNELL

The proposal put forward by Cllr C. Fox, seconded by Cllr. E. Timmins: To maintain the basic rate of Local Property tax for the for the period of one year from the next local property tax liability date 1st November 2018 was put to a vote and following a roll call was passed by a margin of 22 votes for, 5 against 2 not present and 3 abstaining viz:-

FOR (22)	CLLRS T. ANNESLEY, J. BEHAN, V. BLAKE, S. BOURKE, S. CULLEN, P. DORAN, G. DUNNE, P. FITZGERALD, C. FOX, M. KAVANAGH, P. KENNEDY, S. MATTHEWS, G.MCLOUGHLIN, D. MITCHELL, D. NOLAN, J. RUTTLE, J. RYAN, E. TIMMINS, P. VANCE, G. WALSH, J. WHITMORE AND I. WINTERS.
AGAINST (5)	CLLRS T. CULLEN, M. MCDONALD, O. O'BRIEN, D. O'BRIEN, AND G. O'NEILL.
ABSTANING (3)	CLLRS. T. FORTUNE, N. LAWLESS AND B. THORNHILL.
NOT PRESENT (2)	CLLRS. M. MURPHY AND J. SNELL

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

**CLLR. PAT VANCE
CATHOIRLEACH
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**MS. LORRAINE GALLAGHER
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/
MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR**

Date: _____