

**MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY BUILDINGS, WICKLOW ON MONDAY, 26TH
NOVEMBER, 2018 AT 10.00 A.M.**

PRESENT:

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

APOLOGIES:

CLLR. T. CULLEN, M KAVANAGH, G. MCLOUGHLIN, J. RYAN AND E. TIMMINS.

IN ATTENDANCE:

**MR. F. CURRAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
MR. S. QUIRKE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. M. NICHOLSON, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. J. LANE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. T. MURPHY, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. M. GEANEY, A/DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. B. GLEESON, HEAD OF FINANCE
MR. L. FITZPATRICK, HEAD OF IS
MS. B. McCARTHY, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT
MS. L. GALLAGHER, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/MEETINGS ADMINISTRATOR
MS. B. KILKENNY, SENIOR ENGINEER
MR. D. MARNANE, SENIOR ENGINEER
MR. M. FLYNN, SENIOR ENGINEER
MS. H. DENNEHY, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. J. CARROLL, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. T. O'BRIEN, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. A. MINNION, ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
MS. G. LANG, ASSISTANT STAFF OFFICER**

VOTES OF SYMPATHY.

Elected Members passed a vote of sympathy to the families of the late Mrs Sarah Stokes, Mrs Nancy O'Dea, Mr. Paddy Maher, Mrs Breda Tiernan and Mr. John Byrne. A minutes silence was observed for the deceased.

Local Authority Budget, 2019

Elected members were circulated with Wicklow County Council Local Authority Budget 2019 with report of the Chief Executive dated 15 November, 2018 set out as follows:-

15 November 2018

TO: CATHAOIRLEACH AND MEMBERS OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Report of Chief Executive on the Draft Budget for Wicklow County Council for the local financial year ending 31st December, 2019

Dear Councillors,

The Draft Annual Budget and Chief Executive's Report for the financial year ended 31st December 2019 has been prepared in the statutory format, in accordance with S102 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended). The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government has determined that the prescribed period for the holding of the Annual Budget Meeting for 2019 is 1st November to 30th November 2018. Accordingly the statutory Annual Budget Meeting is scheduled for 10am Monday November 26th. The Budget must be adopted within a 14 day period commencing on that date.

As you are aware, there are four main stages to the Local Authority budgetary process.

1. Agree the Budget Strategy and Local Property Tax variation.
2. Develop Draft Budgetary plans for the Municipal Districts.
3. Draft and Adopt the Statutory Annual Budget.
4. Prepare the Schedule of Municipal District Works and Service Delivery Plan.

The attached Draft Budget has been prepared in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group taking account of known financial parameters. This includes the decision of the Members to retain the LPT basic rate for 2019.

Local Property Tax

The Government agreed the Local Property Tax (LPT) Allocations for 2019. Wicklow continues to be a net contributor under the national equalisation model, with 20% of its allocation paid into an equalisation fund to ensure no local authority is worse off when compared to the 2014 General Purpose Grants allocations.

Wicklow County Council's post equalisation allocation (80%) for 2019 is €13,744,712. However, as Wicklow will receive a greater level of LPT funding compared to its funding baseline (€8,547,247), part of this surplus will be used to fund services in the Housing area thereby replacing central government funding for these areas. Consequently, the net LPT

allocation for 2019 is €11,983,425. This represents a small increase on the 2018 LPT allocation of €11,971,635.

Details on this are provided in Table 1 below and also in Appendix 2 of the Draft Budget Tables.

Table 1 – 2019 Local Property Tax Allocation

	2019 (Fin 06 2018)
100% of LPT Income Allocations for Wicklow	17,180,890
20% to National Equalisation Fund	3,436,178
80% of LPT to be retained locally	13,744,712
Amount of surplus to self fund housing	1,761,287
Discretionary LPT Funding for Budget 2019	11,983,425

Municipal Districts

The General Municipal Allocations (GMA) were considered and adopted by the members at the recently held Municipal District budget meetings. I have incorporated the adopted allocations of €228,500 into the overall Draft Budget. I since increased the overall GMA allocation by €10,000 in respect of funding for the Town Teams in each of the Municipal Districts. Table 2 outlines the allocations per municipal district and by expenditure category

Table 2 – 2019 General Municipal Allocations

Description	Arklow	Baltinglass	Bray	Greystones	Wicklow
Town Twinning	6,000	3,000	10,000	6,000	6,000
Economic Development and Promotion	28,000	7,000	9,500	10,000	7,000
Christmas Festival	20,000	10,000	20,000	10,000	20,000
Other Festivals	5,000	4,000	32,000	10,000	5,000
Local Rep/Civic Leadership	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Total	61,000	26,000	73,500	38,000	40,000

The GMA forms only a part of the overall budget for the Municipal Districts and the Draft Annual Budget also includes other significant funding streams under the Schedule of Municipal District Works.

Moreover, additional discretionary funding in the amount of €900,000 has been allocated in respect of Public Realm works. While similar to last year, an amount of €300,000 is being provided in the 2019 budget for the Local Footpath Renewal Scheme.

As you are aware, an amount of €700,000 was allocated between the 5 Municipal Districts in Budget 2018 as part of the IPB capital redistribution programme. This funding will continue to be provided again in 2019 albeit at a reduced level of €500,000.

The total amount of discretionary funding available to the districts in 2019 is nearly €2m as outlined below.

Table 3 – 2019 Discretionary Funding Allocations

Discretionary Funding	Bray	Arklow	Wicklow	Greystones	Baltinglass	Total
General Municipal Allocation	73,500	61,000	40,000	38,000	26,000	238,500
Local Footpath Renewal Scheme	75,000	56,250	56,250	56,250	56,250	300,000
Public Realm Discretionary Funding	225,000	168,750	168,750	168,750	168,750	900,000
IPB Capital Redistribution Payment	125,000	93,750	93,750	93,750	93,750	500,000
Total	498,500	379,750	358,750	356,750	344,750	1,938,500

Schedule of Municipal Works

Following the adoption of the annual budget, a schedule of proposed works of maintenance and repairs to be carried out in each municipal district shall be prepared for adoption by the members in early 2019. To this end, it is appropriate that each Municipal District review their 2018 operations to assess how they have delivered on the Service Plan with a view to agreeing the 2019 works early next year. Furthermore, it is intended to retain the process introduced last year with regard to members' input into the decision making process for the roads programme. To this end, Members will be asked to submit their requests in December in respect of Restoration Improvement and Restoration Maintenance works for 2019.

Commercial Rates

Commercial Rate income is estimated at €27.9m for 2019. This represents an increase of approximately €300,000 due to the inclusion of new business valuations that occurred this year.

Rates Harmonisation

Pre-unification there were four rating authorities in County Wicklow with four separate Annual Rates on Valuation (ARV). The Local Government Reform Act 2014 (S29) provides for the harmonisation of the ARVs. This means rate payers within the County transition to a single county rate. The harmonised ARV of €72.04 was adopted by the Members in 2015. This rate has a materially neutral impact on the finances of Wicklow County Council throughout the harmonisation process.

The Base Year Adjustment (BYA) provides for the phasing of increases and decreases on the annual rates. It was proposed to transition to the rate of €72.04 over 5 years. 2015 was Year

1 and in 2015 the BYA applied meant rate payers were charged the same in 2015 as in 2014. The first year of changes to the rate demands was 2016. The final year of the harmonisation process is 2019 and as such all rate payers will now have the same harmonised ARV of €72.04 applied. The base year adjustment for the former four rating authorities is shown in Table C of the budgetary tables. The impact of this for ratepayers in 2019 is as follows:

- 19% will see an increase of 3% (Former Arklow and Wicklow TC)
- 26% will see an increase of 2% (Former Bray TC)
- 55% will see a decrease of 2% (Former Wicklow CC).

The Draft Budget also provides for the continuation of the Rates Incentive Scheme. The aim of the Scheme is to ease the burden on local ratepayers and address their concerns about the impact of commercial rates. It also helps mitigate the effect of the ARV harmonisation. To this end, a grant of 5%, of the current year bill up to a maximum of €250, will continue to be paid in 2019 as a financial support to occupiers of commercial properties with total annual commercial rates bills of up to and including €10,000, subject to certain terms and conditions. In fact nearly 90% of ratepayers currently operating in County Wicklow are small and medium businesses who are deemed eligible to apply under the incentive scheme (see Table 4).

I also wish to take this opportunity to inform the Members that I plan to introduce a separate rates incentive scheme next year for new businesses. This scheme will be aimed at encouraging the use of vacant premises in the county through the provision of grant support to new businesses. Wicklow County Council aims to encourage thriving and diverse businesses and wants to see the number of vacant retail/commercial properties decrease. This grant scheme is intended to incentivise and encourage new commercial ventures, reoccupy vacant properties and assist in job creation. Details of the scheme will issue in early 2019.

Table 4 - Wicklow Rate Base

Annual Rates Billing Band	No. of Customers	Rates Base Value	Commercial Rates Value	% of Rate Customer by billing band	Average Annual Rate Demand per customer
€			€	%	€
> to 1,000	499	4,375	315,193	15.45	632
1,000 – 2,000	719	14,456	1,041,380	22.26	1,448
2,000 – 3,000	538	18,241	1,314,046	16.66	2,442
3,000 – 5,000	555	29,743	2,142,688	17.18	3,861
5,000 – 10,000	483	46,743	3,367,383	14.95	6,972
10,000 – 15,000	140	23,573	1,698,231	4.33	12,130
15,000 – 20,000	82	19,613	1,412,940	2.54	17,231
20,000 – 30,000	75	25,711	1,852,219	2.32	24,696
30,000 – 50,000	69	35,272	2,541,019	2.14	36,826
50,000 – 100,000	36	34,080	2,455,122	1.11	68,198
100,000 – 500,000	32	85,310	6,145,705	0.99	192,053

> 500,000	2	50,722	3,654,019	0.06	1,827,010
Total	3,230	387,839	27,939,947	100	

Revaluation 2019

Revaluation 2019 is part of a national programme to modernise the rateable valuation of all commercial and industrial property in Ireland. The programme has already been completed in a number of Local Authorities and commenced in Wicklow in October 2017. The Valuation Office has written to all owners/occupiers of rated properties requesting the completion of a Revaluation Information Form. The purpose of revaluation is to bring increased transparency and more equity to the local authority rating system. Following revaluation, there will be a much closer and uniform relationship between the current annual rental values of commercial properties and their commercial rates liability. The new valuations will be published in September 2019 will come into effect for rating purposes from 1st January 2020 onwards. To inform and assist ratepayers with this process, the Valuation Office plan to organise walk in information clinics in each municipal district during the first quarter of 2019.

Rates on Vacant Premises

The LG Reform Act 2014 provides for a change to rating law in relation to the refund of rates on vacant properties. The elected members may, by way of reserved function, vary the levels of rates refund applicable to vacant property in individual local electoral areas. The Act does not make any change to the eligibility criteria for refunds.

The decision to alter the rate of refund should be taken at the Annual Budget Meeting. It is decided in respect of the entire local electoral area and will apply only for the year to which the budget relates. Each local electoral area can have a different rate of refund. In the absence of any decision the existing provisions regarding the rate of refund will apply. The current rate of refund that applies in Wicklow is 100%.

In weighing the decision to reduce the rate of refund the following issues should be considered:

- Limited localised recovery of commercial sectors in Wicklow
- Additional cost-burden to landlords which may hinder tentative recovery
- Majority of property owners are actively engaged in seeking a tenant and it is not in their interest to leave property vacant
- Challenge and cost to the rates collection process.

Furthermore, new legislation is currently being drafted by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government regarding the governance of commercial rates. This legislation will provide for the introduction of a maximum level of vacancy to be determined by the Minister. The provision for the elected members to further reduce the level of refunds will continue, with any proceeds from further reductions added to the General Municipal Allocation.

In light of these factors, it is recommended that the rate of refund for eligible vacant properties remains at 100% for 2019.

Staffing

There is an ongoing need to recruit staff (indoor/outdoor) to maintain services and Budget 2019 attempts to address these demands within the financial constraints we are currently operating under. The Budget provides for additional staff for Wicklow County Council's library services in line with the agreed workforce plan. It also provides for additional personnel in the areas of IT, HR, Legal Services, Economic Development, Housing as well as extra outdoor staff.

The additional cost of the current Public Service Pay Agreement to the budget in 2019 equates to approximately €0.9m of which we will receive only 88% compensation from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. As such, the balance of circa €0.1m will have to be met from our own resources.

2019 Draft Budget Overview

The Draft Budget presented to you provides for expenditure of €102,700,276 in 2019. However, as the Council is statutorily required to prepare a balanced budget, expenditure provisions must be matched by income. The Draft Budget has therefore been prepared with the following income projections:

Divisional Income	€62.9m
Local Property Tax	€12.0m
Rates	€27.9m

While Budget 2019 will be set at a higher level compared to last year, this is mainly due to increased grant aid for housing services and the roads programme which are contra items, so there is limited scope for significant expenditure increases across divisions/services.

In preparing the Budget 2019 we have faced considerable challenges including increased pay and pension commitments as well as restricted sources of funding. The issue of retirements is a serious concern as up to 200 council staff will be eligible to retire over the next 5 years. This is an area that will have to be addressed by Central Government in the future as it is neither feasible nor sustainable for Local Authorities to continue to cover these increasing costs from existing resources. Representations have been made to the Department on this matter however to date no additional funding has been committed by DPER to address this matter and therefore increased costs will have to be met from our own resources in relation to Budget 2019. We must also factor in the loss of pension contributions due to the introduction of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme.

In addition, our other main sources of income are restricted in that the Local Property Tax allocation remains at a similar level to 2018 as new properties cannot be added to the LPT allocation until the end of 2019. We are also in the middle of our rates harmonisation process which also runs until the end of 2019 and until its completion we cannot alter the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV).

Recent communications from IPB to Wicklow County Council have also suggested that due to significant and sustained volatility experienced in the global investment market this year, a significantly reduced dividend payment will be made in 2019. The dividend payment received in 2018 was €434,012, however it is expected that this will be reduced to approximately €130,000. This represents a considerable decrease to our funding stream in 2019.

Heretofore, the pre-letting repair costs incurred on local authority houses was paid out of the Council's Capital Account. However this was in turn creating an ever increasing capital

deficit which needs to be funded. To this end, the issue is being addressed in Budget 2019 through the introduction of a rent review which is expected to generate additional rental income of €0.6m which will be ring-fenced to fund our annual pre-letting costs.

As you are aware, Wicklow’s income from state funding does not compare favourably to other comparable local authorities. Comparing the 2018 annual budget figures Wicklow spends less per person than the national average across all services. We have made representations to central government to address this under-resourcing, including recent submissions under the LPT review and the local government baseline review, but we need to continually pursue this both at official level and also through our elected representatives.

Notwithstanding these constraints, the identification of savings under certain expenditure lines has allowed for increases under a number of divisions/services including such items as:

- Commencement of a Housing Conditional Survey and associated works.
- Additional funding of €150k for central heating installation, boiler maintenance and repairs of our housing stock.
- New funding provision of €250k for fabric upgrade works to our housing stock.
- Increased funding for housing the homeless
- Additional staffing for Libraries in the county and an increase to the Book Fund
- Increased funding for our Fire Services
- Additional funding of €25k to County Wicklow Tourism Promotion
- Additional funding in respect of Wicklow and Arklow swimming pools
- New funding provision for a Climate Adaption Plan
- Retention of the €900k Discretionary fund for Municipal Districts.
- Provision of a €300k allocation for local footpath upgrades/maintenance at Municipal District level.

This increased expenditure has been achieved despite the significant constraints imposed on us in 2019 arising from the impact of the National Public Sector Pay Agreement, a decrease in our annual insurance dividend payment by circa 70%, and additional superannuation commitments.

Key changes in the Draft Annual Budget are summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5 - Summary of Major Changes to Budget 2019		Cost / (Saving)
		€000s
Housing	Conditional Survey & Works	114
	Central Heating Provision	50
	Boiler Maintenance	50
	Rental Income	-600
	Pre-letting Repairs Provision	600
	Fabric Upgrade Works	250
	Homeless Funding Net Increase	-113
	Capital Remediation Works Provision	150
	Disabled Persons Grants	799
	Disabled Persons Grant Income	-629
Roads	Local Road Footpath Renewal Scheme	± 300

	IPB Capital Footpath Repair Scheme	200
	Public Lighting Energy Efficiency	50
	Parking Operations	-243
Development	Vacant Site Levy	-332
Management	Planning Enforcement	± 50
	Digital Mapping	60
	Tourism Promotion	25
	Public Participation Network	± 40
Environment	Fire Service Operations	109
	Recycling Operations	51
	Anti Litter Initiative	25
	Climate Adaption Plan	50
Recreation & Amenity	Arklow and Wicklow Swimming Pools	50
	Library running costs/payroll increase	115
	Library Book Fund	50
Miscellaneous	National Pay Agreement Compensation	-935
	IT running costs/payroll increase	144
	NPPR increase	-200
	IPB Dividend decrease	304
Other	Pension & gratuity increases	351
	Rates Income Increase	-309

± donates a contra entry

Conclusion

I prepared the 2019 Draft Annual Budget in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group and in accordance with the Local Government Act, 2001 (Section 133). This consultation with the Corporate Policy Group has been a key aspect of the budget preparation. At these meetings significant factors within the Budget were raised and discussed and I am grateful to the Members of the Corporate Policy Group and the Cathaoirleach Cllr. Pat Vance for their constructive engagement with the budgetary process.

The 2019 Draft Budget before you today is a plan of action to best deal with the challenging environment of local government. While significant challenges remain in dealing with the economic realities facing the Council, we can cautiously look to build on the progress achieved to date and translate this to increased and improved services growth across the County. The delivery of social and affordable housing continues to be a priority. Moreover we will continue to seek out alternative sources of funding and work in collaboration with the relevant State Agencies, Local Government, Business Community and the Community and Voluntary Sector to maximise all available opportunities to address the local needs and support the economic and social development of County Wicklow.

The draft budget has been prepared in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions, and this report, with the accompanying detailed financial tables, sets out the position for consideration by the Council. There is considerable detail contained in the Draft Budget Report to assist the Members in their deliberations. Please take the opportunity to discuss aspects of the Draft Budget with each of the Heads of Function.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Members of the Council for their support and look forward to continuing to work with the Elected Members to deliver high quality services for the people of Wicklow.

The Draft Budget preparation required significant input from staff across the Council's Divisions. I thank all the Directors and their staff who have contributed to and supported that process. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the Head of Finance, Brian Gleeson and the staff in the Finance Section for their hard work in preparing and framing this Budget.

I recommend the Budget to you for adoption.

FRANK CURRAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

The Chief Executive highlighted the recent funding announcements under the Urban Regeneration and Development fund and the projects that will benefit under the scheme of grant funding.

In terms of the budget he highlighted the challenges on the Revenue Account being:-

- The income from the LPT - 80%
- Number of expected retirements - A draw on resources
- Commencement of Pay Restoration
- Rates cannot be increased having regard to the harmonization process
- Dividend from IPB is down by two thirds.

On the income side the Chief Executive advised that an increase in income from rates is expected having regard to various buildings coming on stream as well as an increase in the vacant site fund. In terms of the additional income expected the Chief Executive advised that there will be some €150,000 for central heating installation and boiler maintenance, and additional €250,000 for fabric upgrade and increased funding for homeless initiatives, as well as additional staff to various sections. He advised of the proposed increases to the bookfund, the fires services, Wicklow and Arklow Swimming pools as well as the proposal to maintain the discretionary fund for the Municipal Districts €900,000 and €300,000 for local footpaths. This was noted by the Elected Members.

Mr. B. Gleeson, Head of Finance presented to the Elected Members covering the following areas:-

Summary

- 2019 Budgetary Process
- 2019 Planned Expenditure and Income
- Financial Challenges for 2019
- New/Additional Expenditure in 2019
- Funding to the Municipal Districts in 2019
- Expenditure/Income Changes to 2019 Budget
- Budget Review by Division
- 2019 Commercial Rates Decisions

2019 Budget Process

- Local Property Tax Rate Variation
- Municipal District Budgetary Plan including the General Municipal Allocation (GMA)
- Adoption of the Statutory Annual Budget
- Schedule of Municipal District Works

2019 Budget Meeting Decisions

1. Adopt Statutory Annual Budget for 2019.
2. Commercial Rates 2019:
 - Determination of Base Year Adjustment
 - Rates Relief % on Vacant Premises

2019 Financial Challenges

1. Restricted Sources of Funding
2. National Pay Agreement
3. Increasing Pension Costs
4. Reduced Income

New / Additional Expenditure in 2019

- Commencement of a Housing Conditional Survey and associated works
- Additional funding for Central Heating installation, Boiler Maintenance and Housing Repairs
- New funding provision for Fabric Upgrade works to our housing stock
- Increased funding for Housing of the Homeless and DPGs
- Additional staffing for Libraries and increase in Book Fund
- Additional staffing for IT, HR, Legal Services, Economic Development, Building Control, Housing and Outdoor Staff.
- Increased funding for Fire Services
- Additional funding for Tourism Promotion
- Retention of €900k Discretionary Funding for MDs
- Retention of €300k Footpath Renewal Scheme for MDs

2019 Discretionary Funding for Municipal Districts

- Public Realm Discretionary Funding €900,000
- Local Footpath Renewal Scheme €300,000
- General Municipal Allocation €238,500
- IPB Capital Redistribution Payment €500,000
- Total Available Discretionary Funding in 2019 to the Municipal Districts is circa €1.94m

2019 Funding for Municipal Districts

Schedule of Municipal District Works:

- Municipal District Works Expenditure > €20m
- Centrally Administered District Works > €10m
- Councillor Input into 2019 Local Roads Programme.

Commercial Rates- BYA 2019

- Harmonised ARV of €72.04 was adopted in 2015.
- The Base Year Adjustment (BYA) provides for the phasing in of increases and decreases on the annual rates.
- 2019 is year 5 and final year of Harmonisation Process.

Commercial Rates – Vacancy Relief Rate

- Recommendation that the rate of refund for eligible vacant properties remains at 100% for 2019.
- Introduction of Rates Incentive Scheme for New Businesses reoccupying Vacant Properties.
- Rates Revaluation – new valuations to issue in Sept 2019

Mr. B. Gleeson, Head of Finance outlined the objectives for the meeting:

- (1) To Adopt the Statutory Annual Budget 2019, with or without amendment
- (2) Determination of Base Year Adjustments – Commercial Rates
- (3) Rates Relief on Vacant premises – Commercial rates

Mr. Gleeson introduced the following divisions:-

Housing and Building Division A- Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2019 of €23,437,721 and a total draft income of €24,546,757 a summarised version set out on page 84 and a more detailed version set out on pages 95-97 in the draft budget book.

Road Transport and Safety Division B – Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2019 of €23,928,758 and a total draft income of €13,556,479 which is detailed on pages 98-100 in the draft budget book.

Elected members raised the following matters in relation to the housing programme which were responded to by Mr. J. Lane, Director of Services.

- Clarification sought on the referral process during the cold weather initiative
- Clarification sought in relation to differential rent and the HAP scheme.
- Proposed Fabric Upgrade scheme
- Increase funding for homeless and DPGs welcomed
- Query as to the timeframe for turnaround of vacant houses
- Reference made to difficulty in accessing house purchase loans.

Elected members raised the following matters in relation to the Roads Transportation and Safety Division which were responded to by Mr. M. Geaney A/Director of Services.

- Update on the additional land on the N11 at Kilmacanogue
- Plan for lighting upgrade and complaints received in relation to new LED lighting
- Responsibility for upgrading public lighting?
- Review of car parking byelaws.
- Local Improvement schemes.

The Head of Finance introduced the following divisions:-

Water Services Division C– Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2019 of €7,529,295 and a total draft income of €6,907,582 which is detailed on pages 86 and 101-102 in the draft budget book.

Environmental Services Division E– Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2019 of €12,753,729 and a total draft income of €2,106,574 which is detailed on pages 88 and 107-108 in the draft budget book.

Development Services Division F – Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2019 of €12,030,058 and a total draft income of €5,650,454 which is detailed on pages 103-104 in the draft budget book.

Queries raised by the Elected Members were responded to by Mr. M. Geaney, A/Director of Services, Transportation, Water and Emergency and Mr. Sean Quirke, DOS, Environmental Services respectively:-

- Call for clarification from the Chief Executive that there will be no proposals during the coming year to introduce charges at council owned recycling centres.
- Clarification on the mobile collection service in West Wicklow and any proposed plans to abandon the collection?
- Maintenance of burial grounds
- Clarification of figures contained within the report for private installation and administration of group water and sewerage schemes.
- Clarification of figures contained within the report on maintenance of public conveniences.
- Additional clarification sought on climate adaptation

- Availability of fire hydrants on the cliff walk.
- Clarification on service agreement between Wicklow County Council and Irish Water.
- Clarification in relation to maintenance of burial grounds and funding of the 48 cemeteries across the county.
- Proposal for Burial walls.
- Planning enforcement issues
- Timeframe for the Review of the County Development Plan and local area Plans having regard to the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy
- Unfinished housing estates issues
- Economic development figure for Arklow relative to Wicklow MD.

The Head of Finance introduced the following divisions:-

Recreation and Amenity Division F – Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2019 of €8,567,535 and a total draft income of €1,005,332 which is detailed on pages 89 and pages 109-110 in the draft budget book.

Agriculture, Education Health and Welfare Division G – Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2019 of €1,767,266 and a total income of €832,487 which is detailed on pages 90 and 111-112 in the draft budget book.

Miscellaneous Services Division H– Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2019 of €12,685,914 and a total draft income of €8,321,622 which is detailed on pages 91 and 113-115 of the draft budget book.

Mr. M. Nicholson, Director of Services, Culture, Community and Social Development Department responded to issues raised by Elected Members around areas of parks and open spaces in the Municipal Districts and operational costs of playgrounds.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Cllr. P. Fitzgerald proposed the adoption of the budget as presented with one amendment that the discretionary funding for the Municipal Districts be increased by €64,000 to over €2m. This was seconded by Cllr. V. Blake. Mr. B. Gleeson, Head of finance identified B09 car parking as an area of cost savings from which this funding could be taken. The proposal was put to a vote and following a roll call was passed by a margin of 27 votes for and 5 not present viz:-

FOR 27	CLLRS. T. ANNESLEY, J. BEHAN, V. BLAKE, S. BOURKE, S.CULLEN, P. DORAN, G. DUNNE, P. FITZGERALD, T. FORTUNE, C. FOX, P. KENNEDY, N. LAWLESS, S. MATTHEWS, M. MCDONALD, D. MITCHELL, M. MURPHY, D. NOLAN, O. O'BRIEN, D. O.BRIEN, G. O'NEILL, J. RUTTLE, J. SNELL, B. THORNHILL, P. VANCE, G. WALSH, J. WHITMORE AND I. WINTERS.
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NOT PRESENT 5	CLLRS. T. CULLEN, M. KAVANAGH, G. MCLOUGHLIN, J. RYAN AND E. TIMMINS.
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TO ADOPT THE DETERMINATION FOR BASE YEAR ADJUSTMENT 2019

The Head of Finance advised that the harmonized ARV rate of 72.04 was adopted back in 2015, that the base year adjustment provides for the phasing in of the increases and decreases on the annual rates and that the final year of the harmonization process is 2019. He advised that as such all rate payers will have the same ARV of 72.04 applied in 2019 and therefore the base year adjustment will be zero in respect of 2019.

It was proposed by Cllr. C. Fox, seconded by Cllr. G. Walsh and agreed to adopt the determination for base year adjustment 2019 by a margin of 26 votes for, 1 against and 5 not present viz:-

FOR 26	CLLRS. T. ANNESLEY, J. BEHAN, V. BLAKE, S. CULLEN, P. DORAN, G. DUNNE, P. FITZGERALD, T. FORTUNE, C. FOX, P. KENNEDY, N. LAWLESS, S. MATTHEWS, D. MITCHELL, M. MURPHY, D. NOLAN, O. O'BRIEN, D. O'BRIEN, G. O'NEILL, J. RUTTLE, J. SNELL, B. THORNHILL, P. VANCE, G. WALSH, J. WHITMORE AND I. WINTERS.
AGAINST 1	CLLR. M. MCDONALD.
NOT PRESENT 5	CLLRS. T. CULLEN, M. KAVANAGH, G. MCLOUGHLIN, J. RYAN AND E. TIMMINS.

TO ADOPT A VACANCY RATE FOR COUNTY WICKLOW.

It was proposed by Cllr. J. Snell, seconded by Cllr. S. Bourke and agreed to adopt a vacancy relief rate of 100% for the year 2019.

Correspondence: Review of the Role and remuneration of the Elected Members:

L. Gallagher advised that the elected members had been notified by email of the 21st of November, 2018 that the Minister for State and Local Government Reform is conducting a review of the role and remuneration of elected members and that Senior Counsel Ms. Sarah Morehead had been engaged to conduct this review. She advised that the terms of reference had been circulated and that the Minister, through Senior Counsel has extended an invitation to the elected members to make a submission.

Local Area Plans: The Cathaoirleach requested the elected members from the Greystons area and the Wicklow Area to remain in the chamber to receive information in relation to the local Area Plans.

In conclusion the Cathaoirleach thanked the elected members for engaging in the process and to Mr. Brian Gleeson and the finance team and all the staff for facilitating the various meetings leading up to the budget.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

**Cllr. Pat Vance
Cathaoirleach,
Wicklow County Council**

**Lorraine Gallagher
Senior Executive Officer,
Enterprise & Corporate Services**