

Minutes of the Budget Meeting of Municipal District of Baltinglass held in Donard Community Hall, Donard on 19th October 2020, at 10.30 a.m.

Present: Cathaoirleach Patsy Glennon
Councillor Vincent Blake
Councillor Gerry O'Neill
Councillor Avril Cronin
Councillor John Mullen
Councillor Edward Timmins

In Attendance: Ms. Theresa O'Brien, Planning, Development & Environment
Mr. Dermot Graham, A/Senior Executive Engineer
Mr. Garvan Hickey, District Administrator
Ms. Andrea Connolly, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Ms. Breege Kilkenny, District Manager
Mr. Pat Byrne, Executive Engineer

1. To consider the Draft Budgetary Plan for the Municipal District of Baltinglass for the financial year ending 31st December 2021

Mr. Hickey, District Administrator, advised members that a copy of the Chief Executive's report on the Draft Budgetary Plan for the Municipal Districts of Wicklow County Council for the financial year ending 31st December 2021 had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. It outlined a period of difficult financial times due to the devastating impact Covid - 19 has had on the Council's finances. He outlined that there will be no General Municipal Allocation for 2021 due the uncertainty over the Council's finances. Mr. Hickey pointed out that it would not be prudent to commit to any discretionary funding at this stage of the budget process due to the loss of income from the Local Property Tax and the impact of Covid and the lack of clarity on funding next year from the Dept in advance of the national budget. He added that the five Municipal Districts are being treated equally.

Cllr. Mullen questioned why Wicklow and Arklow have a discretionary budget and Mr. Hickey explained that these figures are separate allocations based on income generated by these districts. The exceptions relate to Municipal Districts that have generated their own income via local sponsorship agreements e.g. roundabout schemes in Arklow and Wicklow and as such GMA provisions have been made in this respect.

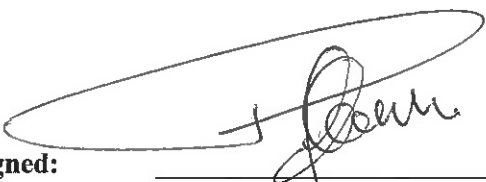
Cllr. Mullen raised the issue of the lack of an allocation for graveyard maintenance for Tinahely area and Ms. O'Brien informed members that a submission had been made to Finance and would need to be adopted at the Budget meeting in Wicklow. Cllr. Timmins noted that in previous years a breakdown of allocations is included on the report and raised concerns over adopting a budget when the funding is unknown. Mr. Hickey advised that there is no breakdown of allocations this year as there is no General Municipal Allocation due to a shortfall of funding. Cllr. Glennon asked if there is no discretionary funding available for members. Cllr. O'Neill raised concerns at the cost of running the public conveniences, €40,000 annually, and stated that this is an ongoing concern for members and needs to be addressed for once and for all. Cllr. Glennon concurred with Cllr. O'Neill and agreed this issue needs to be referred to Ms. Kilkenny.

Members expressed their frustration at the lack of discretionary funding and queried if this could be revisited in the next financial year. Mr. Hickey noted that the General Municipal Allocation 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. The Schedule of Municipal District Works will come before members for adoption in 2021. Mr. Hickey noted that the area of discretionary funding may be further examined within the overall budget process over the coming weeks, depending on the National Budget 2021 and Government measures to support Local Authority Finances.

Members queried the budget process and Mr. Hickey advised members of the legislative basis for the budget process.

Following a detailed discussion by the members on the issues of adopting a budget prior to knowing fully the financial situation and the continued impact of the pandemic on Wicklow County Council finances members agreed to adopt the budget. Cllr. Blake stated that

although he has a number of reservations he proposed the adoption of the budget and Cllr. Timmins seconded the adoption of the budget.


Signed: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed: Garran Hickey
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated: 23/11/2020