**COMHAIRLE CONTAE THA CLIATH THEAS
SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL**

Minutes of Special Organisation, Procedure and Finance Committee Meeting held on 27th October 2016.

**PRESENT**

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| **Councillors** |  | **Councillors** |
| Bonner, B.  |  | Johansson, M. |
| Casserly, V. |  | Kearns, P. |
| Coules, N. |  | King, C. |
| Dermody A-M. |  | Lavelle, W. |
| Donovan, P.  |  | Lawlor, B. |
| Duff, M.  |  | Leech, B. |
| Dunne, L.  |  | Looney, D. |
| Egan, K. |  | Mc Cann, C.  |
| Fanning, E.  |  | McMahon, R.  |
| Ferron, B.  |  | Mahon, K. |
| Foley, P.  |  | Murphy, M. |
| Genockey, M. |  | O’Brien, E.  |
| Gilligan, T.  |  | O’Connell, G. |
| Gogarty, P. |  | O’Connor, C. |
| Graham, J.  |  | O’Toole, L.  |
| Higgins, E.  |  | Richardson, D.  |
| Holland, S. |  | Timmons, F. |
|  |  | Ward, M. |

**OFFICIALS PRESENT**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chief Executive | D. McLoughlin. |
| Directors/ Heads of Function | L. Maxwell, B. Coman, E. Taaffe, F. Nevin, T. Walsh. |
| Head of Finance | R. FitzGerald. |
| Senior Executive Officers | M. Judge. |
| Financial Management Accountant | M. Kelly.  |
| Senior Parks Superintendent | S. Furlong. |
| I. T Research and Development Officer  | R. Herron. |
| Administrative Officers | C. Murphy. |
| Senior Staff Officer | S. Sinclair. |
| Staff Officer | P. Brennan. |
| A/Assistant Staff Officer Clerical Officer  | L. Abbey. M. Dunne. |
| Sord | A. O’Brien |

The Mayor Councillor G. O’Connell Presided.

Apologies were received from Councillors E. Murphy, R. Nolan, D. O’Brien, D. O’Donovan and F. Duffy.

**BUDGET PRESENTATIONS FROM:**

**1) Chief Executive Report**

Mr. D. McLoughlin, Chief Executive addressed the Members about the proposals for 2017:

**To the Mayor and Each Member**

**Annual Revenue Budget 2017**

Dear Member,

The attached budget, which has been presented in the statutory format, has been prepared in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group and has taken into account elected members views generally having regard to issues raised during the past year. It is informed by the financial context at central and local level and as always is focused on the delivery of the Corporate Plan objectives.

In this context, the budget priorities are predictable and follow the format of recent years in keeping with planned priorities including housing supply, economic development, tourism and aesthetics, enhanced service delivery and community engagement. The health and wellbeing of our citizens is paramount and we continue to try and positively influence this in the context of library, sport, recreation and community provision. The progression of our objectives involves a partnership approach with our citizens, our partners in the business community and state agencies. Fundamentally, progress is also predicated on our organisational capacity and associated resources.

**Organisational and Financial Capacity**

This Council, in keeping with public sector norms of recent years, had endured significant staff reductions up to last year, when the recruitment embargo was lifted subject to the completion of a detailed workforce planning exercise and the availability of matching finance. Having completed this exercise this Council has for the last 18 months been dealing with internal and external recruitment issues to match our needs. In addition to substantial internal restructuring and promotions, approximately 140 staff have been added to the organisation across all staff grades. There remains 65 vacancies, which are in the process of being filled sequentially. While this process has been disruptive, it will have a considerable positive impact on capacity once recruitment is completed by early 2017. A return to recruitment together with national pay awards has increased revenue and capital payroll by €5,000,000 over the period 2015 – 2017 including an additional €1,500,000 for the year ahead.

Once again, in 2017 no increase in commercial rates is proposed and the LPT reduction has been maintained at 15% for the 3rd year running. There has been no increase in business rates since 2009 and rates supports have been made available to SMEs since 2014 under the business support grant. In recent years, it has been possible to respond to increased costs, while gradually expanding service provision through savings, efficiencies, buoyancy in rates and fee income, and a modest increase in discretionary income from the Local Property Tax. While I expect rates and fee income to remain buoyant, the growing demand on services from an increased population and our expansion into new services will inevitably require additional supporting income in the years ahead. In light of this financial reality and the improving local economy, the following steps will be taken during 2017:

• The existing rates support grant to SMEs paying rates of €10,000 or less will be reviewed by the Economic Development SPC in early 2017.

• The level and value foregone of rates vacancy at €13,000,000 remains high and calls into question the sustainability of our refund policy. During 2017 and in advance of any decision on the 2018 Budget, a comprehensive research paper will be finalised on the background and trends underlying this problem.

• As part of our planned participatory budgeting exercise detailed below and through customer surveys, we will endeavour to elicit a more comprehensive view of attitudes and expectations relating to LPT.

**Housing**

Regrettably housing supply shortages continue to adversely impact on the rental market, resulting in affordability gaps and economic homelessness, which has necessitated a move to accelerated housing supply. As detailed in reports to Council, we are extremely active in all aspects of the National Housing Strategy “Rebuilding Ireland”. Next year will see the commencement of a number of infill schemes together with the completion of over 200 rapid build units. We will continue to roll out the HAP programme, under which approximately 20 applicants a week are being signed up and maintain our good work with Approved Housing Bodies to provide housing solutions. Once again the homeless budget has been increased and now stands at €2,596,000. This is a measure of the crisis we are endeavouring to manage.

Notwithstanding the urgent need for additional housing, we will continue to work with existing tenants to improve our existing stock of 9,194 dwellings, which requires an annual maintenance budget of €14,222,200. The €1,000,000 planned maintenance programme has again been provided for, while the €200,000 provision for estate roads has been increased to €300,000. A new one off provision of €1,000,000 has been provided to make substantial inroads into the backlog of DPG extension and improvement works required to council properties, in cases which have already been medically assessed.

The housing function has become increasingly complex in recent years with multiple strands of support and applicant/tenant interaction. The growth of these various strands has been accompanied by the development of ad hoc systems, lacking in integration and connectivity in terms of user visibility. This has made management and administration of the housing function more difficult and impacts negatively on tenant services. We have reviewed all aspects of housing operations and supporting systems during 2016 and are clear about the improvements required in management and more particularly systems. It is planned to move into the procurement phase of a new fully integrated housing IT system by the year-end, that will have a two-year installation and implementation phase, which will greatly improve the working environment and tenant supports. This system will give staff, tenants and housing applicant’s full end to end visibility on all service areas, including applications, allocations, repairs and rent collection etc.

**Enhanced Service Delivery**

It is our ambition to increase or at least enhance, service delivery informed by peoples’ expectations each year as resources allow. The full year impact of increased staff resources and substantial investment in machinery will be evident throughout 2017. In addition to the increased housing allocations outlined above, provision has also been made for the following:

• €250,000 has been provided to fund a third full time tree pruning crew.

• €200,000 is set aside to fund 15 additional seasonal workers over the summer period, to supplement our outdoor staff in the areas of public realm maintenance.

• A revised approach to public realm maintenance will be piloted in 2017, based on town and village teams responsible for all aspects of maintenance, presentation and appearance.

• An additional once off provision of €300,000 has been made to accelerate footpath improvements.

• A new provision of €100,000 for traffic calming measures will allow for this programme to continue while also allowing the 30kph signage programme to be completed in 2017. Separately a new provision of €150,000 has been made for traffic signal renewal and replacement.

• Following on from the adoption of the Litter Management Strategy, an additional €100,000 has been provided for associated initiatives including graffiti removal.

• The successful Public Lighting Replacement Programme has already yielded energy savings of €200,000 and provision has been made for a further 2,000 replacements next year.

• In keeping with our ongoing emphasis on health, wellbeing and quality of life, significant progress is being made with regard to library, sport, recreation and arts provision. Details of the various initiatives are outlined under the various divisions and elsewhere in the Capital Programme.

**Citizen Engagement**

Fundamental to service delivery and its improvement, is the level and manner of engagement with citizens and communities. As a council, we are constantly challenged to improve our communications, systems and processes. This budget contains a number of initiatives, which aim to do just that:

• A discretionary fund of €300,000 has been provided to underpin community engagement at electoral area level on the subject of participatory budgeting. A framework for this engagement process will be agreed before February 2017. The exercise, which will take a number of months, will involve traditional engagement such as town hall meetings and new media channels of communication. The process will culminate in an electoral area determining its priorities for the spending of this discretionary allocation.

• The gradual recovery of the housing market presents challenges to us as a local authority and to those wishing to engage with the market. One of these challenges is access to information, with particular emphasis on those seeking to make a significant lifetime decision to purchase a property. We will during 2017 as part of our planning function, establish a property economics division. In the first instance, this will include a one-stop shop information platform, detailing activity in the housing market where interested parties can explore options through details of the Development Plan, planning permissions, current and planned construction sites etc. This front of house walk in service is aimed at affording house purchasers the opportunity to make an informed decision about their future.

• As detailed above significant investment in ICT is planned in the housing area, which on completion, should greatly improve our means of engagement with tenants. We also need to appreciate and keep pace with peoples’ expectations around digital access to information and services. In this regard, we are currently redesigning our web site and plan before the year-end to commence a “Procurement by Challenge” process, which will explore options to enhance and improve citizens’ access to services and means of engagement, in an increasingly digital world. An initial budget of €500,000 has been provided for this much-needed investment in future proofing our services.

• The rollout of the Play Space Programme has in turn raised questions about appropriate forms of recreation for young teenagers. In order to better inform the future allocation of resources in this area, a broad based consultation process with this age cohort will be conducted by mid-2017 and tabled for discussion at a future Council meeting.

**Economic Development, Tourism & Business**

We have made significant progress on a number of fronts with regard to our economic development objectives, supported through the annual budgetary process and our three year Capital Programme. In particular, it is opportune to record progress in the following areas:

• The Village Enhancement Programme continues, works are completed in Rathcoole, Newcastle, Rathfarnham and Tallaght. Works planned for Saggart, Lucan and Templeogue will be progressed during 2017. A further €1,000,000 has been provided in this Budget in support of this programme.

• In addition to the improvements to the public realm made possible through the deployment of additional resources in 2016, a further €550,000 has been provided in this budget to further resource improvements in this area, including an additional tree pruning crew, additional staff to assist with seasonal work such as grass cutting and an additional €100,000 to fund specific anti-litter initiatives.

• A further provision of €250,000 has been made to fund the landscaping of the N81, which will be progressed through planning by the end of this year. This is an important statement of this Council’s intent in relation to public realm presentation.

• The advancement of the Tourism Strategy will see a significant milestone with the opening of the Round Tower Centre in early summer 2017 and funding has been provided in this regard. Over the coming six month period, significant studies on the Dublin Mountains, Corkagh Park Cluster, Rathfarnham Castle outbuildings and the Liffey Blueway will provide greater clarity on the opportunities and need for investment in tourism infrastructure, in order to best position this county to benefit from its edge of city location. In this context, a further provision of €1,000,000 has been made in this Budget to help fund tourism infrastructure attractions.

• Another element of our tourism product development is the promotion of existing and new festivals of regional scale. This year we have increased investment in the Red Line Book Festival and will in 2017 fund Gaelforce East as a new festival focused on outdoor sport and recreation.

• Our Tourism, Marketing and Branding Strategy is well advanced and will be finalised during 2017 and will inform among other things, a Tourism Signage Strategy for which a provision of €200,000 has been made again this year.

• While concerns remain regarding the potential outcomes of Brexit, business sentiment generally has improved greatly in the last two years. We continue to experience considerable FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) at Grange Castle Business Park and will pursue opportunities to expand the Park in the coming year. As in 2016, a Business Support Fund representing 1% of rates income or €1,200,000 has been provided for in this budget. The Economic Development SPC will bring forward specific recommendations as to its use in early 2017. This will include a re-examination of the support grant to SMEs paying €10,000 or less in rates.

**Community Development and Supports**

Volunteerism and community support is critical to the work of this council and to the development of community spirit. It is in this context that annually provision in excess of €2,000,000 is made for community programmes and projects. These financial provisions cover such diverse areas as arts, libraries, sports and recreation, festivals and events, social inclusion and health and wellbeing. The full ranges of programmes are highlighted in the divisional detail provided.

It is important to acknowledge the success of initiatives, such as the Community Initiative Fund and our Endeavour Awards, which are again funded in 2017. We have made real progress with our Tidy Town groups, all of whom attained additional marks for their communities in 2016. A support fund of €100,000 has again been provided for in 2017. Likewise €100,000 has been provided to support community festivals including a new intercultural food festival. This is in addition to the regional scale festivals referred to above.

**Conclusion**

The range of initiatives and core funding supports provided for in this budget are aimed at honouring and implementing our five-year Corporate Plan.

I want to thank the Corporate Policy Group for their advice and guidance in this process and in particular, to thank Ronan FitzGerald, Head of Finance and all staff involved in the budget preparation process, for their professionalism and diligence.

Yours sincerely,

***Daniel McLoughlin***

***Chief Executive***

**2) Head of Finance**

Mr. R. FitzGerald Head of Finance presented an overview of the Draft Budget for 2017.

**3)** **Director of Housing, Social and Community Development**

Mr. B. Coman, Director of Housing, Social and Community Development, presented Divisions A, D, F & G.

**Cllr. M. Duff** asked if the €1 million provision in the budget is to be used exclusively for the windows and doors programme or does it include the energy efficiency programme (cavity wall insulation and attic insulation)?

**Mr. B. Coman** informed there is a provision in the budget for €1 million between revenue and capital for windows and doors.

**Cllr. R. Mc Mahon** referred to the €230,000 in for partnership with the FAI, the Leinster Branch of the IRFU, GAA and Cricket Ireland what is this money specifically spent on?

**Mr. B. Coman** We have a joint collaboration with the 4 sporting bodies and this money is used to fund salaries on a 50/50 basis for the development officer. The development officers work directly with clubs schools and small community groups and other organisations.

**Cllr. L. Dunne** there is **€**1.7million in the budget provided for the Community Employment Schemes and Jobs initiative – can you outline where this money is spent?

**Mr. B. Coman** the money is used to fund the Community Employment Schemes and is fully recoupable from the Department. Also an element of this money covers materials and training.

**Cllr. P. Gogarty** asked if we could encourage healthy eating in the school meals programme. There are sugary foods being given in the breakfast clubs and this is not being monitored by the Department.

**Mr. B. Coman** the school meals are traditionally handled by Dublin City there is no linkage between the breakfast club and the school meals. The breakfast clubs are run by teachers and the schools themselves. The items provided for school meals are milk and a sandwich. At all functions organised by the Council for young people we would provide water and fruit in line with our healthy eating programme.

**Cllr. M. Ward** Is there any update on the talks with the HSE on the need for an occupational therapist in the Clondalkin area? Are we going to employ our own occupational therapist?

**Mr. B. Coman** the occupation therapist reports are an issue in the Clondalkin and Lucan area Mr. Coman has been in discussion with the HSE. Discussions are ongoing on this matter. However Mr. Coman said if there are particular hardship cases he will deal with these on a case by case basis to assist with them.

**Cllr. L. O’Toole** in all the community initiative funds are schools included in these especially where some schools cannot get funding from the Department of Education?

**Mr. B. Coman** there will an evaluation at Social and Community SPC and they will look at this issue.

**Cllr. L. Dunne** €600,000 allocated to women’s refuge and homeless unit last year has this been continued on this year?

**Mr. B. Coman** there was €300,000 allocated to the women’s refuge and €300,000 for the homeless unit last year and this money is repeated again in the 2017capital programme.

**Cllr. C. King** wanted to say that on page 17 the second bullet point needs to be changed in the book “up to” to be removed from the text as per CPG Meeting?

**Mr. B. Coman** gave a commitment to make this amendment in the adopted budget book.

**4)** **Director of Land Use, Planning and Transportation**

Mr. E. Taaffe, Director of Land Use, Planning and Transportation, presented Division B and D.

**Cllr. W. Lavelle** asked at B0206 National secondary roads we only adopted €86,000 but the outturn was half a million why is this? Local roads general maintenance he would be concerned of outturn as it is slightly lower then we adopted. Under Div. D enforcement cost are falling why is this?

**Mr. E. Taaffe** said with regard to B0206 the reason it is outturn is higher is due to grants from TII that came in 2016. This is a contra item with matching income and expenditure. The main reason for the difference on B0405 is due to the reallocation of staff cost between regional roads and local roads. Enforcement cost are falling again due to reallocation of staff costs. There are still 2 full time planning inspectors.

**Cllr. P. Donovan** asked for an explanation in relation to LED upgrades in the Rathfarnham area on pre 1990 installations. She understands there is a solution being put in place could Mr. Taaffe outline this and does it come with funding not included in the budget?

**Mr. E. Taaffe** on the LED issue it’s highly technical with regard to the pre 1990 were installed by the ESB. We are seeking to engage experts to assess the issue and to recommend possible solutions.

**Cllr. S. Holland** B0303 winter road maintenance there is a big difference are we expecting bad weather this year?

**Mr. E. Taaffe** there is a reallocation of the cost across the winter maintenance jobs but the overall expenditure for the programme is the same as last year.

**Cllr. E. Fanning** B1001 roads capital programme could you please explain this?

**Mr. E. Taaffe** B1001 where we charge staff costs and support on the roads capital programme and we revised it to be more reflective of the work being done. We don’t have a big capital programme at present.

**Cllr. L. Dunne** LED lighting still going ahead with the post 1990 estates?

**Mr. E. Taaffe** Yes we are hoping to do some of the busier regional roads like the Belgard Road and we hope to start on the older estates in the second half of next year.

**5)** **Director of Environment, Water and Climate Change**

Ms. T. Walsh, Director of Environment, Water and Climate Change, presented Divisions C, E, F, G & H.

**Cllr. S. Holland** C0899 LA service support there is an increase why is this? E0201 recycle facilities Operations there is a difference here and she was just wondering why? E0602 Provision of Litter bin no allocation why is this? G0405 Horse Control could she explain this one is there enough money here?

**Ms. T. Walsh** C0899 is service support costs to cover Central Management Charges. C0201 the recycling facility is now gone so this is why there is a difference. Litter bins are included in the operation of street cleaning. There is a National programme in place to deal with this issue of Horse Control.

**Cllr. W. Lavelle** the issue of misconnections, pollution of watercourses are we looking for EU Funding in this regard are we getting funding for the fowl water pollution in Lucan? Is there any money being put into the budget for this?

**Ms. T. Walsh** South Dublin County Council and DLRR have put in a joint application under the stream funding programme to the Department. There is a provision of €300,000 in the budget to continue the detection of misconnections in the County.

**Cllr. C. King** C0301/99 there is a difference between the adopted budget last year and this year why is this?

**Ms. T. Walsh** Yes water billing has gone to Irish Water, however under the SLA we still carry out meter reading and there is also a requirement for us to provide historical information for accounts.

**Cllr. L. O’Toole** the provision for burial grounds is blank, when did we last provide a burial ground? Are we going to provide one for Clonburris and Adamstown?

**Ms. T. Walsh** with regard to burial grounds we have adequate space for the next 5 years and we are constantly reviewing the situation.

**Cllr. E. Higgins** in E04 there is a reduction in Environmental awareness service support costs and also in F04 in the arts programme why is this?

**Ms. T. Walsh** E04 Service support costs are central management charges. And F04 was a one off grant in 2016 from Music Generation.

**Cllr. S. Holland** E1301 water quality Management what is this?

**Ms. T. Walsh** The water quality is more to do with the river pollution as opposed to drinking water.

**Cllr. C. O’Connor** welcomed the budget presentation and acknowledged the work done in the public realm. He asked could it be clarified if the grass cutting programme was to a common quality standard across the County? There is an issue on the price for cars going into Ballymount with roof racks how come they are charging more?

**Ms. T. Walsh** we have put in extra money for all areas with regard to trees, graffiti and grass cutting. There is an overall standardisation of grass cutting in the County. With regard to cars with roof racks it is likely that these would be charged extra similar to those with trailers.

**Cllr. E. Higgins** page 74 Table F under goods and services other income increase in this why?

**Mr. R. FitzGerald** said Page 74 Table F is the income from PEL.

**Cllr. B. Bonner** asked was there any provision in the budget for boundary treatment at St. Cuthberts Park?

**Ms. T. Walsh** There is an increase in the provision in public realm improvement works for this issue.

**Cllr. G. O’Connell** asked what the funding for Air and noise pollution control covers.

**Ms. T. Walsh** this is the salaries and some material costs of the Environmental Health officers replying to complaints and monitoring of noise and noise mapping.

**6)** **Director of Economic Enterprise and Tourism Development**

Mr. F. Nevin, Director of Economic Enterprise and Tourism Development, presented Division D & F.

**Cllr. T. Gilligan** in terms of the business support grants how many businesses are availing of the grant and how successful is it?

**Mr. F. Nevin** said the business support grant is the same as last year.

**Cllr. S. Holland** P64 heritage facilities operations what the difference is between what we estimated and the outturn?

**Mr. F. Nevin** the difference in the heritage facilities operations is €600,000 transfer to capital for Templeogue house.

**Cllr. B. Bonner** when is the North Clondalkin library starting?

**Mr. F. Nevin** It is about to go to tender.

**Cllr. E. Higgins** D0502 why has this not increase should round tower not be in there?

**Mr. F. Nevin** Yes there is a small budget in for €50,000 for Round tower by way of a start-up marketing budget.

**7)** **Director of Corporate Performance and Change Management**

Ms Lorna Maxwell, Director of Corporate Performance and Change Management presented Divisions D, G, H and J.

**Cllr. S. Holland** was there any savings in restricting the printing for the Members?

**Ms. L. Maxwell** We thought it would be more significant than it was but we reduced the budget for next year.

**Cllr. R. McMahon** do we pay rates to ourselves?

**Ms. L. Maxwell** yes we do pay our own rates.

**Cllr. T. Gilligan** with regard to the Elected register do we still print it will there be savings if we don’t.

**Ms. L. Maxwell** it is available on PDF and there is a pilot project for the Register of Electors to be completely electronic. When this happens we will have significant savings this should happen in 2018.

**8)** **Division H**

 Mr. Ronan FitzGerald, Head of Finance presented Divison H.

**Cllr. D. Looney** welcomed the initiative of participatory budgeting.It would appear we will be the first LA to do implement this. There will be a need for all Councillors to get actively involved and to form a working group to progress this model.

**Cllr. P. Donovan** she is fully supportive of the participatory budgeting. She thinks that it should be cross party and a working group needs to be established and the terms of reference should be clear.

**Cllr. R. McMahon** irrecoverable rates how do we know that they are irrecoverable?

**Mr. R. FitzGerald** We look at businesses that have gone into receivership, liquidation or examinership and explore all ways of recovering the debt. When we have exhausted all available options a decision is made to categories the outstanding debt as irrecoverable.

**Cllr. G. O’Connell** encouraged all Members to embrace this opportunity to put in place the participatory budgeting process. He also asked the Members to examine the budget in advance to the budget meeting of 3rd November 2016. He thanked the CEO and all the staff involved in this year’s budget process.

Meeting finished at 5.26pm.