**To the Mayor and Each Member**

**Annual Revenue Budget 2020**

Dear Member,

The attached Budget which is presented in the statutory format has been prepared in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group, taking account of Members’ views generally, our corporate commitments and external drivers, including central exchequer funding resources. The 2020 Budget, which is the first of this elected Council, builds on progress made in recent years and reflects continuing investment priorities in key areas such as housing, enterprise and employment, climate action and recreation and amenity. It also seeks to build on our continuous improvement in front line service delivery, in so far as resources and circumstances allow. The Budget for 2020 provides for total expenditure of €255,755,400 which represents a 5% increase on 2019. Budget Income of €118,807,400 from a range of services and sources including rents, fees, charges, loan repayments, grants and recoupments is provided for. The balance totalling €136,948,000 will be funded from a combination of commercial rates and Local Property Tax (LPT).

**Financial Capacity and Local Taxation**

As in previous years, the Budget takes account of our financial capacity. The primary influences in this regard include ongoing statutory commitments, wage inflation, rates buoyancy, central funding and the decisions of Elected Members in relation to rates and LPT. The following items in particular have been influential in framing the Budget:

* There is no increase in the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) or Commercial Rates Multiplier
* Commercial Rates Vacancy Scheme will continue to provide a 50% refund for properties vacant in 2020
* Local Property Tax will be reduced by 15% for 2020 as approved by the Members at the September Council meeting
* Rates buoyancy of €8,600,00 is reflective of reduced vacancy and refund rates and new premises coming on stream over the past 18 months. The increase also includes rates from Irish Water in the sum of €3,279,966 previously paid as a grant. Irish Water were valued on a global basis for the first time on the 18th October 2019 and have until the 14th November 2019 to appeal their valuation. Previously, South Dublin County Council received a grant from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in the sum of €6,852,500 and this grant has been excluded from Division H income. There has been a net reduction in income to South Dublin County Council of €3,572,534 as a result of this global valuation process
* Housing rental income yield will increase by €4,000,000 to take account of:
* Rents from new properties over 2019 and the current year
* An average increase of €3 across the board
* The scheduled withdrawal of the temporary subsidy to OAP rents. This will now no longer apply in properties where there are additional occupants

**Housing**

Our comprehensive build, purchase and leasing initiatives under the Capital Programme continue to meet and exceed targets. In the context of current operations, the following new and enhanced measures are in keeping with our intention to enhance services where possible, on an ongoing basis:

* Pre-let repairs have been increased by €1,000,000 to €2,500,000
* The homeless budget is now at €3,800,000
* An additional €1,000,000 has been added to the Planned Maintenance Programme to fund the planned and approved acceleration of this programme
* Private rental inspections will again increase from 2,446 in 2019 to a planned 3,262 with an associated budget increase of €130,000
* The €300,000 provision for the repair of council estate roads has been maintained
* In recognition of ongoing estate management challenges, this budget has been increased by €100,000
* Under the planning budget €100,000 has been provided to undertake a comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment across all tenure types – this will be undertaken on a countywide basis by all four local authorities

**Economic, Enterprise & Tourism Development**

Provision for the current and future generations must include a focus on job retention and creation. In this regard, investment in existing business and future opportunities are provided for including:

* The continuation of the €1,000,000 Business Support Fund, the targeted distribution of which will be agreed by the Economic Development SPC
* The provision of €1,389,300 for tourism promotion including €750,000 for the Tourism Infrastructure Fund, including the Dublin Mountains and Rathfarnham projects
* The continued €500,000 annual funding for a programme of works for District and Neighbourhood Centres to be agreed at Area Committee meetings before the year end
* A specific provision of €300,000 for greening and landscape enhancements to Clondalkin Village Centre
* The continuation of aesthetic improvement works to the N81. Phase two proposals will be brought before the Area Committee before the year end
* The year on year village improvements facilitated by the magnificent efforts of our Tidy Towns Groups is again supported in the sum of €100,000
* A further provision of €500,000 has been made in recognition of plans to provide a new Enterprise Innovation Centre in central Tallaght. Architects and project partners have now been appointed for this project
* A Business Investment and Marketing Prospectus is being prepared in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce and will be published in early 2020
* The expansion of the Grange Castle Campus has now been approved by Council and the access road and accompanying infrastructure will be contracted by the year end
* Having received €14,800,000 in Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) funding for Tallaght based projects, the planning and execution of these projects is now progressing well

**Recreation, Amenity & Community Development**

The development of social infrastructure in the interests of community integration, health and wellbeing and quality of life is central to our approach to community development. We have made good progress in this regard and aim to build on that, with the following additional and enhanced initiatives:

* The Play Space Programme is almost complete and by year end the county will have 49 Play Spaces, an increase of 70% since the Programme began. The initial five Teen Space pilots are due for completion over the coming months and a further €500,000 has been provided in 2020 to invest in teen facilities
* The Playing Pitch Capacity Study will be presented to Council by the year end and a further €1,000,000 has been provided in 2020 for all weather facilities
* Architects for the design of the North Stand and West Stand enhancements to Tallaght Stadium have been appointed and a further €500,000 is provided in this regard
* New libraries in Clondalkin and Tymon will open in quarter one 2020 and the final site selection for the planned Rathcoole library will be completed with the planning of the associated housing scheme and primary school
* Community funding has been increased by €85,000 to support further health and wellbeing initiatives, while an additional €100,000 has been provided to prepare a comprehensive Local Sports Plan and to kick start its implementation
* Lucan Pool will open in January 2021 and initial marketing funding has been provided in 2020 in recognition of this start date

**Climate Action**

In 2019 the Council adopted the inaugural Climate Change Action Plan 2019 – 2024 which provides an opportunity for the Council to clearly illustrate its commitment in this regard, which although ongoing for years, was largely undocumented. A clear Action Plan for 2020 will be published in the near future and clear commitments have been made in the Budget in this context:

* A €300,000 Climate Action Innovation Fund has been provided for
* Funding of €50,000 has been provided to prepare a Sustainable Transport Policy
* Tallaght District Heating Scheme construction works will commence in February 2020.
* We are committed to continue with the electrification of our fleet
* An additional allocation has been made to increase annual tree planting to 2,000 trees up from the current level of 1,700
* Further areas will be identified to expand our Pollinator Plan Planting Programme.
* An additional €500,000 has been provided to accelerate our Public Lighting LED Replacement Programme. We are actively planning the procurement of the next 10,000 replacements which will save 1,126 tonnes of carbon, or 38% of the overall corporate target of 40% by 2030
* Further funding of €200,000 has also been provided to finalise the completion of the Energy Lighting Retrofit Programme in county buildings
* The roll out of water fountains in the interests of eliminating single use plastics will continue in 2020
* Early in 2020 we will detail plans for the introduction of EV charging points at 20 locations in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

**Enhanced Service Delivery**

Notwithstanding all of these fine initiatives in the public interest, there remains a continued demand for enhanced service delivery which is augmented by an ever-increasing population. Once again, we have sought to enhance service delivery and front-line services. In addition to initiatives already mentioned, the following additional improvements are also provided for:

* The provision for 16 seasonal workers on grass cutting has been provided for at a cost of €370,000
* An additional €500,000 has been provided to deal with tree management issues
* The street cleaning budget has been increased by €265,000 to increase the frequency of cleaning across all routes
* The footpath repairs provision has been increased by €500,000
* An additional €100,000 has been provided for small works to parks and public realm, while the grass cutting budget is also increased by €96,000
* The public lighting improvements budget has been increased by €500,000 aforementioned above
* A specific provision of €100,000 has been made to fund heritage restoration projects
* The fire service budget has been increased by €1,000,000
* The 300k Have Your Say provision has again been made and the electoral area will be chosen at the Budget meeting

**Conclusion**

The Budget as presented is particularly positive in the context of the available funding and while more needs to be done, it is a true reflection of our corporate objectives and the wishes of the public as expressed through our elected representatives.

I want to sincerely thank the CPG, the expanded Council membership and particularly Ronan FitzGerald, Head of Finance and his team for the advice, support and hard work involved in the preparation of this Budget, which I am happy to commend for adoption.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel McLoughlin

Chief Executive