## **COMHAIRLE CONTAE ÁTHA CLIATH THEAS** **SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL**

Minutes of South Dublin County Council November 2020 Special Budget Organisation Procedure and Finance Committee Meeting held on Thursday 12 November 2020

### **PRESENT**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Carey, W. |  | Lawlor, B. |
| Collins, Y. |  | Mahon, K. |
| Costello, T. |  | McCrave, L. |
| Duff, M. |  | McMahon, R. |
| Dunne, L. |  | McManus, D. |
| Edge, A. |  | Moynihan, S. |
| Gogarty, P. |  | Murphy, E. |
| Hayes, A. |  | O’Brien, E. |
| Holohan, P. |  | O’Connell, G. |
| Johansson, M. |  | O’Connor, C. |
| Kavanagh, P. |  | O’Donovan, D. |
| Kearns, P. |  | O’Hara, S. |
|  |  | Sinclair, L. |
|  |  | Tuffy, J. |

### **OFFICIALS PRESENT**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chief Executive | D. McLoughlin. |
| Directors/ Heads of Function  Head of Finance | L. Maxwell, F. Nevin, T. Walsh, M. Mulhern, C. Ward.  R. FitzGerald. |
| Senior Executive Officers  Financial Management Accountant | C. Hurson.  M. Kelly. |
| Administrative Officers  Executive Accountant | M. Reilly.  A. O’Melia. |
| A/Senior Staff Officer  Assistant Staff Officer  Clerical Officer  IT. Support  Sord | L. Abbey.  A. Hagan  D. Murphy.  R. Saiz.  A. O’Brien. |

The Mayor, Councillor E. O’Brien, presided.

Apologies were received from Councillors C. Bailey, V. Casserly, L. Donaghy, K. Egan, S. Fay, T. Gilligan, C. King, E. Ó Broin, C. O’Byrne, L. O’Toole, B. Pereppadan, D. Richardson, F. Timmons.

As the meeting was being held in Tallaght Stadium, the Mayor, Councillor E. O’Brien, outlined the emergency exits and read out the following in relation to Covid 19 :-

It is essential that we follow the Government and HSE guidelines during this meeting.  If anyone has a positive response to any of the following questions, I request that you absent yourself immediately from the meeting:

* If you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness, or flu like symptoms now or in the past 14 days?
* If you have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days?
* If you are a close contact of a person who has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
* If you have been advised by a doctor or the HSE to self-isolate at this time?

As there was no response from any member in the affirmative, the meeting proceeded. As previously agreed, the meeting would conclude after 2 hours.

Mr. D. McLoughlin, Chief Executive thanked the Members in relation to pre-Budget discussions and informed that the Draft Budget being presented reflects same, he referred to his presentation in the Draft Budget 2021:

Dear Member,

The attached budget is presented in the statutory format and has been prepared in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group and takes account of Elected Members’ views generally. The context and budgetary considerations are dominated by the ongoing COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic including human, financial and broader socio–economic implications. While somewhat secondary, the budget is clearly cognisant of our corporate commitments, national government policy and a future beyond this current crisis. The 2021 Budget underpins our ongoing role in the provision of essential services, supporting business and community resilience at this very difficult time, while continuing investment priorities in key areas such as housing, community, youth and recreation services, enterprise and employment, climate action and a sustainable future. It also seeks to protect and expand our front-line service delivery in so far as resources and circumstances allow. The Budget for 2021 provides for total expenditure of €268,019,900 which represents an increase of over 5% on 2020. This increase is primarily associated with increased activity in housing services including HAP and RAS which are fully funded, obligations under the national wage agreement, insurances and cost increases associated with new developments.

**Economic Context and Financial Considerations**

The onset of the Coronavirus pandemic in March resulted in very significant socio–economic implications which are ongoing. Many businesses are closed for the second time, unemployment is currently at 16%, while domestic consumer demand has reduced by 7.5%. Nationally, government had to provide an additional €16.75 billion in 2020 to support employment, business and essential public services. While hope increases of a vaccine and the prospect of a gradual return to economic stability, the prevailing view is that 2021 will require continued economic stabilisation measures, business supports, community health and wellbeing programmes, together with significant capital investment to support employment and position the economy for a swift recovery in the short term. The government has provided an additional €8.5 billion for 2021 in recognition of this likely scenario together with a recovery fund of €3.4 billion.

The impact locally is reflected in the €30,000,000 allocated to businesses under the Business Restart Scheme and the requirement to provide nine months rates support to over 6,000 impacted businesses to the value of €54,000,000. This Council’s reliance on rates income (50%) underlines its vulnerability to economic shocks such as that now being experienced. General fee income associated with economic activity reduced by €1,500,000 in the same period, while the debt collection environment has been challenging. Nevertheless, careful financial management and planning in the past, affords some resilience and flexibility in the short term to maintain services and continue to plan for the future through targeted capital investment.

In the context of the foregoing the Budget has been prepared with the following considerations in mind:

* The need to have clear regard for the vulnerable financial climate and the flexibility to adjust to circumstances as they emerge in the year ahead. This is best reflected in the retention of budgets for a whole range of community and business supports which can be adapted and repurposed as necessary, depending on the level of activity across business and society
* Continue to provide essential services subject to government and national health directives, while mindful of the health and safety of all our staff
* Provide the best possible support to business, enterprise, and employment
* To show clear community leadership and to remain vigilant in the protection and support of our most vulnerable, including our younger and older generations who face particularly challenging circumstances at present
* Protect what we have, including our investment in community infrastructure to ensure we are ready to fully reactivate our services and programmes once circumstances allow
* Look to and plan for a brighter more sustainable future beyond this current crisis

**Community Resilience, Wellbeing, Equality and Social Inclusion**

In the period since March, Local Government has been central to the continued provision of essential public services including community supports. Given the COVID restricted circumstances, we have had to engage with communities in a very different way. Moving programmes online, click and collect services, online health and wellbeing activities and the very successful “Community Call” initiative, have all been part of the response to support and galvanise community resilience during this difficult time. In this regard the budget seeks to:

* Place a significant emphasis on physical activity, arts, culture and sport, including their delivery through alternative mediums as required
* Maintain and expand outdoor recreation including the continued availability of parks, playgrounds, playing fields and allotments with restrictive measures as appropriate
* Maintain funding for all community support programmes including grants and subventions to the value of €2,200,000, in the hope that as many as possible can be reactivated and where not, the money used to fund alternative online and innovative approaches to community engagement in the interests of social inclusion and positive mental health
* Maintain full funding for our arts activities including the South Dublin Arts Office, The Civic Theatre, Rua Red, Music Generation and the Creative Ireland Programme, including Cruinniú na nÓg. Spend in this area is approximately €1,000,000. A lot of consideration is being given to moving performances and presentations online and outdoors, to help sustain this important sector and provide our communities with much needed access to arts activities and performances
* Provide funding for a range of social inclusion and equality initiatives, including the Community Call, South Dublin Age Friendly Strategy implementation, the establishment of a South Dublin LGBTI+ Network, Women in Politics, a new Migrant Integration Forum and a Traveller Engagement Initiative
* Continue the “Community Call” support framework with our various partners to cater for those feeling most isolated in this restricted environment   
  + To expand our library services including the opening of new libraries in Tymon and Clondalkin, two new mobile libraries and the continued online reading, education and mental health support programmes
  + Maintain our focus on keeping communities engaged through innovative online consultation, social media messaging and new online delivery channels for sports and social inclusion programmes
  + A modest budget of €10,000 has been set aside to follow through on the Mayor’s initiative to celebrate front line workers and remember our recently deceased at an appropriate time
  + Particular emphasis has been placed on youth and younger persons activities as outlined below

**Supporting Business, Enterprise and Employment**

The devastating impact of COVID – 19 on local trading conditions for business has been recognised by government, with the provision of a nine-month rates waiver for impacted businesses, together with the ReStart Grant Scheme. The consequences of ongoing restrictions in areas such as food, hospitality, entertainment, arts, leisure and individual professional services are not yet fully known. Recognition of this and the collateral impact on employment is an immediate concern for the local economy. In this regard, the following measures in the budget and our three-year capital programme are important local economic interventions that will be of assistance in the short term;

* As a local employer of up to 1,300 people and an overall current spend of €268,019,900, this Council will continue to make a significant contribution to the local economy. We will maintain our employment levels and add approximately 12 graduates and apprentices, together with 16 seasonal workers to assist with summer activities
* Our Capital Programme will see the commencement of non-housing projects worth €80,000,000 and housing projects initiated by South Dublin County Council worth €430,000,000 in the next 12 months. The labour intensity of capital investment in construction is estimated at 12 jobs per €1,000,000 spend. In this context, these projects will, over their construction, sustain over 5,000 jobs  
  + The LEO office and our Economic Development office will continue to work with the local Chamber in implementing government support programmes and making our €1,000,000 Business Support Fund available for training and repurposing grants
  + A local indigenous prospectus/ promotional brochure is in the final stages of production and will be launched in early 2021
  + In early 2021 we will complete the infrastructure contract to facilitate the opening of an additional 500 acres in our Grange Castle Business Park
  + During 2021 we will commence construction of the Tallaght Innovation Quarter including the new €14,000,000 Innovation Centre
  + While Tourism investment has been delayed in the Dublin Mountains and the Rathfarnham Castle Stables Projects, work will proceed on the upgrade of Corkagh Park, the completion of the Dodder Greenway and the ongoing enhancement of our villages with €3,000,000 investment planned for Templeogue and Lucan
  + Our new District Enhancement Programme will commence next year, with the first four centres of Castletymon, Bawnogue, Neilstown and Ballyroan-Rosemount being prioritised

**Climate Action and Our Sustainable Future**

Our Climate Change Action Plan 2019–2024 and the current review of the County Development Plan provide further opportunities to reinforce worthwhile achievements to date, in the interests of a sustainable future. Budget 2021 provides additional support in this regard, as does the ongoing capital development programme. Among the initiatives underway and provided for are:

* A full programme of Climate Action Plan initiatives, including a repeat of the 2020 €300,000 Climate Action Innovation Fund. This will see particular attention placed on:
  + The soon to be published EV Charging Point Strategy
  + The commencement of the Tallaght District Heating Project later this year
  + The launch of our Biodiversity Plan
  + The continuation of the roll out of our County Pollinator Plan
  + Our Tree Planting Programme will accommodate up to 2,000 trees planted to augment our urban forestry programme while a further €350,000 will be invested in tree pruning
  + The launch of Cycle South Dublin, our ten-year strategy for the development of cycling as a travel mode of choice, into the future. In addition, a specific budget of €250,000 has been included for the upkeep of cycle lanes. A further €55,000 has been provided for data analysis including traffic counts and €40,000 for bicycle lockers. It is anticipated that 10 projects in 2021 will deliver an additional 30km of cycle lanes
  + The continued development of the Dodder Greenway and the final planning of the Liffey Valley Greenway via Lucan between the Grand and Royal canals
  + Following the appointment of a Fleet Manager, a detailed decarbonisation policy for Council vehicles will be completed to follow on from our successful trial of electric vehicles
  + The continuation of our public lighting LED replacement plan, with plans for a further 200 lights to be replaced in 2021, bringing the total to 12,000 since 2015. A further 9,000 remain to be completed by 2026, with total anticipated energy cost savings of €760,000 per annum on completion
* The review of the County Development Plan is underway and will include the development of a Mobility Strategy incorporating plans for cycling, Bus Connects, Dart+ and park and ride facilities. The plan will also for the first time, incorporate green infrastructure and open space strategies and will look to maximise the development of brownfield sites including the Naas Road, for which a new masterplan will be completed next year
* An important element of forward planning is the animation and bringing to life of Local Area Plans. In this regard, a specific funding provision of €60,000 has been made to advance micro plans for areas within LAP’s like the Airton Road linear park, Carrigmore Park in Citywest, the Burgage South Park in Newcastle and the 12th Lock at Lucan

**Housing**

Housing remains a key priority and while we are making progress on our housing and homeless numbers, challenges remain. Our housing programme although disrupted with COVID restrictions, will continue next year with the advancement of schemes at Riversdale, Homeville, St. Catherines, Templeogue Village, Greenfort Gardens, Old Bawn, Nangor Road and Balgaddy.

In terms of our major sites, Kilcarbery will commence before the year end, Killinarden is at tender stage and the award for the design of Clonburris Phase 1 will be awarded in the coming weeks. We have also agreed the development of an affordable apartment scheme at Belgard North which is now going forward for detailed design. Across all project types, investment of €430,000,000 in housing is expected in projects to commence next year.

Plans for an affordable housing scheme are to be confirmed by government by the year end and we are well positioned to avail of this opportunity when it arises.

The €10,000,000 Planned Maintenance Programme is well funded with a further €1,400,000 being provided in 2021. Contractors are now in place to advance this programme. The €300,000 for estate roads has again being provided in 2021.

**Supporting our Youth**

Investing in our youth has always been a priority and in these difficult times is even more important. The planned investments in recreational and sporting infrastructure as outlined below will help to counteract the negative experience of living through COVID -19 and will serve us well into the future.

* The completion of Lucan Leisure Centre in late summer 2021
* The completion of new libraries in Tymon and Clondalkin later this year
* The development of new community centres in Saggart, City West and Balgaddy
* New sports pavilions in Griffeen and Corkagh Park
* The opening of a new music studio in Clondalkin library
* The fit out of a new “Think Big “space in our Foróige centre in Tallaght in conjunction with AWS. This is the first of its kind in Europe and has been successfully developed by AWS in the US
* The upgrade and redevelopment of our open spaces at Killinarden, St Cuthberts, Kiltipper and Corkagh Park
* The provision of a further €500,000 for our Teenspace Programme with nine locations now agreed at Collinstown, Ballycragh, Kingswood, Avonbeg, Esker Park, St. Cuthberts, Bancroft Park, Griffeen and Templeogue
* Designs for a new intergenerational centre in Templeogue will be agreed by the year end, which will greatly assist youth activity in the area
* Additional monies have been provided for Comhairle na nÓg and Cruinniú na nÓg
* Our new Playing Pitch Strategy will commence with the development of a new astro pitch in Tallaght, early in 2021

**Conclusion**

The Budget as presented, while mindful of current circumstances, is positive in the context of the plans to support businesses and communities during this difficult time. Substantial plans for immediate investment in physical and social infrastructure will serve the local economy well during construction and society well for decades to come. The delivery of these services and the design and development of these projects have continued in as normal a way as possible by our tremendously dedicated staff. I want, in the preparation of this budget, to express sincere appreciation for their efforts. As always, I also 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

### **H1/1120 BUDGET PRESENTATIONS FROM:**

1. **Head of Finance**

Mr. R. FitzGerald Head of Finance presented an overview of the Draft Budget for 2021.

1. **Director of Housing, Social and Community Development**

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

**Councillor E. Murphy**: In relation to Community Grants for 2020, the expected outturn is €100,000 less than what was budgeted will this be carried over to 2021?

**Councillor L. Dunne:** Will the savings from the windows and doors replacement from Budget 2020 be carried forward to 2021 and the Budget increased?

**Councillor D. McManus:** On page 18 of the 2021 Budget the figure for homeless services is €3.8m, however, on page 11 the figure for homeless services is €2.5m what is the difference?

## **Mr. C. Ward:** The Council provides €2.5m to DCC for the operation of the regional homeless services – €3.8m is the total cost of homeless services to SDCC including salaries. Windows and doors replacement is a Capital programme, the funding is in the Revenue Budget and the expenditure is Capital. The funding for Community grants will be retained for 2021.

1. **Director of Land Use, Planning and Transportation**

Mr. M. Mulhern, Director of Land Use, Planning and Transportation, presented Division B and D.

**Councillor D. McManus**: Is there any change in income projected for pay and display parking? Also, if a fine is issued and goes to court is this income for SDCC or for the Court?

**Councillor. R. McMahon:** Is €1.65m per year enough to complete the LED programme to 2027? In relation to the Dodder Valley Green Way, how does the budget compare to 2020 and what has been the spend in 2020?

**Mr. M. Mulhern:** There is a slight projected increase in income for on-street parking of €40,000. If a fine is issued through the court the income goes to the Council. Regarding the LED programme €1.65m is budgeted for 2021, it will slightly increase in 2022 to €1.8m on approval from Council and will remain at €1.8m until completed, the total cost to complete the programme will be just over €10m, based on current projections. The Dodder Valley green way forms part of the Capital budget and is also funded by the NTA and ERDF.

1. **Director of Environment, Water and Climate Change**

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

**Councillor D. O’Donovan:** Regarding tree maintenance, my understanding is that there was more money for this, which forms part of F0301 on page 71, this shows a decrease of €774,000. The preamble says that we hope to carry out maintenance on 5,500 trees, the most we seem to complete is about 4,000 how can we achieve this?

**Councillor A. Edge:** In relation to Other vet services, does this include the dog pound and how much will this be affected by the contract coming to an end? Is the contract coming to an end for all Dublin local authorities or just South Dublin?

**Councillor B. Lawlor:** F0301 €250,000 is to be carried over, is it in capital, how is it carried over, is it separate to this?

**Ms. T. Walsh:** €472,000 is estimated for Control of Dogs, including our own dog wardens, licenses and €150,000 of this is allocated for dog pounds. We will be going to tender for dog pound services at the end of this year. The contract end date is not the same for all Dublin local authorities. SDCC only pay for pound services as we employ our own dog wardens.

There is no decrease in tree maintenance allocation for 2021 contained within F0301 overall figure, the reduction in the overall figure is due to the reallocation of insurances to different departments where the claims relate to i.e. moved from Public Realm/Park to Roads. There is an increase for tree maintenance of €350,000, to include specialised contract work as well as direct labour. The tree maintenance contract in 2020 is €1.2m, it is estimated to spend €960,000 this year the surplus will be capitalised and brought back into revenue for 2021. There were 4 months of 2020 where contractors could not work due to COVID 19. We estimated 4,000 trees for pruning, we will complete approximately 3,500. An additional €350,000 has been provided for 2021.

**Councillor M. Duff**: In relation to G0405 other animal welfare services (inc. Horse Control), €343,000 was agreed for 2020 with a balance of €76,500 not spent, can we help fund voluntary services like My Lovely Horse with this money?.

**Councillor R. McMahon:** 1,500 trees to be planted is this a decrease on this year?

**Ms. T. Walsh:**  In relation to G0405 SDCC makes a contribution to animal charities. Money allocated under Control of Horses relates to the direct cost of removing horses from public lands and roads, the cost is recouped from the Department, this reduction is good news, as it indicates that the number of stray horses in the county has fallen.

994 trees have been planted in 2020 to date, 1,500 is an increase and an additional 1,000 whips will be planted in small urban forests.

1. **Director of Economic Enterprise and Tourism Development**

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

1. **Director of Corporate Performance and Change Management**

Ms L. Maxwell, Director of Corporate Performance and Change Management presented Divisions D and H.

**Councillor J. Tuffy:** Why do we contribute to Morgue and Coroner expenses? Regarding conferences abroad and discretionary fund how much was spent in 2020? Is there money left and can it be ringfenced for something that Councillors can have an input into? Can Councillors get a briefing on the Moorehead Report my understanding is SDCC Councillors will come out worse?

**Councillor D. O’Donovan**: I echo Councillor Tuffy’s comments regarding what happened to the €70,000 for Conferences abroad?

**Councillor L. Dunne:** What is the new members discretionary fund, what is it for and what will it be spent on? What happened to the €70,000 as there was no travel in lockdown?

**Councillors M.** **Duff, M. Johansson, P. Kearns, K. Mahon**, **P. Gogarty, L. Dunne. and P. Holohan** all spoke in opposition of a Councillors Discretionary Fund with concerns regarding the transparency, governance, and accountability of such a fund. Alternative uses for the money such as adding to community grants, additional educational bursary funds, homeless services, apprenticeships and highlighted the fact that if the €60,000 fund was added to €20,000 twinning and €70,000 conferences abroad the would be a potential additional €150,000 to help communities or to add to the €300k Have Your Say participatory project. Clarity as to how the fund would be managed was queried.

**Councillors A. Hayes and B. Lawlor** spoke in support of the discretionary fund and hoped the additional funding would help each local area.

**Councillors G. O’Connell, J. Tuffy and E. Murphy,** queried the details of the fund, how much would be allocated? how it would be managed? and asked for further details on the proposal.

**Ms. L. Maxwell**: Informed that the Coroners’ costs are a shared service across the Dublin Region based on a percentage of the population, costs have considerably reduced as the Department of Justice is now involved. Regarding expenditure of the €70,000 Conferences Abroad or €20,000 Twinning, there was none for 2020, this allocation will go into the 2020 revised budget. The €60,000 Discretionary Fund is a new item as a result of proposals in budgetary discussions. It was proposed that the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and each Area Chair receive €10,000. The €60,000 discretionary fund is provided under H0905 other expenses. The parameters of the expenditure or governance to be applied are to be decided if agreed by members.

**The Mayor, Councillor E. O’Brien**: Informed that if the €60,000 discretionary fund was approved it may help towards smaller projects in each ACM that might slip under the radar and that the fund would, hopefully, be used in consultation with all members of the ACMs.

1. **Head of Finance - Division H**

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

**Councillor R. McMahon:** There have been a lot of changes due to COVID how do you predict outturn of 2020. In H0302 there is a 50% increase in the budget what is this from? Regarding the refund of rates, there is a difference of €51m, is this the credit from government and has it all been received? Was money due to be spent on roads and footpaths in relation to accidents?

**Mr. R. FitzGerald**: In relation to 2020 outturn, we are planning to complete as much of the current expenditures programmes as possible, monies not spent will be capitalised at year end where possible and made available in the future, we are not anticipating a deficit in our accounts for 2020. There is included in H0302 an increased bad debt provision in anticipation of the impact from COVID. We have provided for €54m for the rates waiver in the revised budget for 2020. The first claim to the department for the 50% waiver was received today and the 2nd claim for the 25% waiver announced in the national budget, will be submitted the first week in December and payment is expected to be received by the year end. The IPB dividend included in the budget for 2021 is separate to the capital distribution.

**Councillor K. Mahon**: Can we get confirmation that the mechanism does exist that different rate payers can pay differential rates whereby only a few rate payers are affected and that where there is rate increase some rate payers can get a rebate under the Government waiver scheme? What is happening with Differential Rents?

**Mr. R. FitzGerald:** There is a proposed increase of €300,000 for differential rents there are no proposals to adjust rates.

**Mr. C. Ward**: The increase in differential rents will affect 460 households whose income levels are above social income thresholds.

[Draft Budget 2021 Presentation](http://membersnet.sdublincoco.ie/Meetings/ViewDocument/67957)

### **H2/1120 DRAFT BUDGET 2021 Tables A-F**

[Draft Budget 2021](http://membersnet.sdublincoco.ie/Meetings/ViewDocument/67927)

The Tables were **NOTED.**

The Mayor, Councillor E. O’Brien, informed the Members that he would circulate information regarding the procedure for submitting amendments for the Annual Budget meeting.

Meeting Finished @ 17:00