

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE, LIMERICK, ON FRIDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER, 2019, AT 10.00 A.M. TO CONSIDER THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2020.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:

Councillor M. Sheahan, Mayor.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Benson, Butler, Collins (B), Collins (J), Collins (M), Costelloe, Donegan, Egan, Foley, Galvin, Hartigan, Keary, Kiely, Kilcoyne, Leddin (B), Leddin (J), McSweeney, Mitchell, Murphy, O'Brien, O'Dea, O'Donoghue, O'Donovan, O'Hanlon, O'Sullivan, Ruddle, Ryan (E), Ryan (M), Scanlan, Secas, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (K), Sheehan, Slattery, Talukder, Teefy.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive (Mr. P. Daly), Deputy Chief Executive and Director, Support Services (Mr. S. Coughlan), Director, National and Regional Shared Services (Ms. C. Curley), Director, Service Operations (Mr. K. Lehane), Director, Community Development (Mr. G. Daly), Director, Housing Development (Ms. A. Duke), A/Director, Economic Development (Mr. V. Murray), Director, Physical Development (Mr. B. Kennedy), A/Director, Capital Investment (Mr. J. Delaney), A/Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Services (Mr. J. Clune), Administrative Officer, Corporate Services (Ms. F. McCormack), Financial Accountant (Mr. P. Murnane), Financial Accountant, Finance Department (Ms. I. Griffin), Administrative Officer, Finance (Mr. K. Dore), Staff Officer, Finance (Ms. C. Liston), Communications Officer (Mr. D. Tierney).

Circulated (a) Draft Chief Executive's Budget Report and Tables, including Capital Programme 2020-2022; (b) Proposed Vacant Property Refund Scheme 2020; (c) Proposed Small and Medium Business Support Scheme 2020; (d) Proposed Tourism Sector Support Scheme 2020; (e) Proposed Business and Retail Incentive Scheme for Vacant Property 2020; and (f) Budget 2020 Presentation.

The Mayor opened the Meeting by stating that the Members were required to consider the Chief Executive's Draft Budget of Limerick City and County Council for year ending 31st December, 2020, the Draft Budget having been served in accordance with Section 103 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.

In recommending the Budget to the Council for consideration, the Chief Executive advised that the 2020 budget process had significant input and feedback from the Members through formal Statutory Meetings and numerous Workshops. The Chief Executive stated that the Budget 2020 process for engagement with Members commenced on September 16th with an initial Corporate Policy Group meeting. There were two further Corporate Policy Group

meetings held on 14th October and 11th November. This was followed that day with a Full Council Workshop on the Budget 2020 process, the strategy underpinning the Budget, while also looking at the Local Property Tax considerations. On 23rd September, the Council made its decision on the rate of Local Property Tax. Also, the draft budgetary plan was approved by each of the Municipal Districts and Metropolitan District during 17th to the 23rd October. A detailed Workshop had been held on Monday, 11th November, where the Draft Budget 2020 was presented to Members, followed by an extensive Question and Answer session which had assisted in explaining the Budget and its strategy in detail.

In summary, the Chief Executive outlined the extensive consultation with the Corporate Policy Group, the Municipal Districts and the Full Council, and stated that the views of all the Council Members across all of these Meetings and Workshops had been comprehensively considered. It was now necessary to consider the Chief Executive's draft Budget for 2020, in accordance with Section 103 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended, along with determining the Annual Rate on Valuation. Also, the 3-year capital programme 2020-2022 would be considered in accordance Section 135(2) of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended. In relation to the various proposed Schemes, they would be considered subsequently, as set out on the agenda. The Chief Executive then provided the Members with an overview of the draft 2020 Budget.

The Chief Executive outlined to Elected Members that this was an important Budget for a number of reasons. It was the first Budget of the new Council of its five-year term and so it was setting the platform for the Council's ambitious plans and strategy moving forward. This Budget was a balanced Budget and it was building on previous Budgets that consolidated the Council finances. It allowed for the innovative delivery of many services, programmes and projects positioning Limerick as an enviable location to live in, invest in and visit. Budget 2020 would allow this progress and strategy to continue to be domestically strong, internationally focused in a post-Brexit environment, while also delivering on the Council's statutory roles and its core local services in and throughout Limerick.

The Budget also proposed no increase in the Annual Rate on Valuation for commercial ratepayers. The proposed Budget Schemes, such as the Small and Medium Business Support Scheme, Tourism Sector Support Scheme, Business and Retail Incentive Scheme for Vacant Property and Vacant Property Refund Scheme were specially targeted to assist many key sectors of the economy.

The Budget ultimately would help underpin the proposed new Corporate Plan which would be presented at the next Council Meeting. This would give full expression to the Budget strategy and begin the planning for a transition to the proposal for a Directly Elected Mayor in Limerick.

The Chief Executive stated that job creation and investments were powering ahead. Limerick was continuing to be one of the top performing investment locations in Ireland. Limerick had delivered more than 17,000 jobs in the last six years, with more than 1,500 jobs announced since January 2019, including new investments from Nautilus Technologies, Fund Rock and

QAD, and expanding facilities such as Regeneron, J&J, Becton Dickinson, BDO, EY, to name but a few. Overall unemployment was down to 6.1% from a high of 17% in 2010.

The Limerick Twenty Thirty DAC investments were paying off. The recently completed, award-winning Gardens International was almost fully let after an 18-month €17.6million build.

The eagerly awaited development of the Opera Project was progressing through planning and the Cleaves Site master planning was underway for a major new development on the riverside. The Budget also supported the development of the Cityxchange project, a keystone of the recently approved Digital Strategy.

2019 was another successful year for Innovate Limerick as it continued to expand its functions with key highlights including:

- The purchase of the former Shannon Development Enterprise site in Kilmallock.
- The purchase of a building in Main Street, Abbeyfeale, that would be fitted out as an E-Hub in 2020.
- Finishing works in the Business Park in Rathkeale that had provided space for several new operations, including Design Pro, the Butterfly Club, Mid-West Suicide Prevention and a new E-hub which would open in 2020.
- Getting funding approval from Enterprise Ireland to expand ENGINE on Cecil Street to accommodate a new Digital Collaboration Centre to be constructed in 2020.
- Employing the first Regional Film Manager to promote and target growth in the Film/TV industry in the Limerick and Mid-West Region

The announcement of the UL City Centre Campus development was a game-changer for Limerick and it would prove, in time, to be a signature investment for Limerick and the Mid-West Region. In addition, the new proposals for Bishops Quay were welcome, while continuing the development of the Quayside and wider Riverfront.

The budget also supported the launch and implementation of Limerick's revitalised brand identity launching early next year. Limerick City and County Council would target investment, domestic and international tourism like never before. A powerful new message had been developed to convey the attitude and advantages Limerick uniquely delivered for complex, multi-faceted audiences at home and abroad.

The Council was confident that amplifying its new narrative nationally and internationally would build on its continuing resurgence. The new Tourism Strategy was targeting over 1m visitors per annum and would seek the development of new products and festivals beginning in 2020 that were enabled by the Budget. The recent announcement of the 2026 Ryder Cup for Limerick and other major sporting events would be supported by the Council's strategy.

Community

Budget 2020 would actively allow for the further engagement with, and support of, communities. It would address enhancing quality of life for citizens by supporting new public realm projects and programmes across the City and County in libraries, galleries, museums, cultural and arts centres, and across events.

It would also focus on the dereliction/vacancy issue and delivery of public realm improvements in urban areas and villages that would animate the public space and support place-making activities.

Housing

As a Local Authority, the Council continued to ensure that the housing challenge was addressed in a focused and concerted manner across its Build, Buy and Lease Programmes in order to meet its targets on the Rebuilding Ireland Programme. Limerick City and County Council would work towards providing the enabling infrastructure for key sites in its ownership to allow for the eventual delivery of affordable homes in Limerick through Serviced Sites Funding. Strong collaboration with Approved Housing Bodies would continue as a means of enhancing delivery mechanisms, while also providing additional services to tenants. The roll-out of the planned Maintenance Programme would commence in 2020 and would include a Pilot Maintenance Grant Scheme for tenants in the Kilmallock area.

Physical

Provision was also made in the Budget to progress key infrastructural projects, such as the Foynes to Limerick Route, the Cork to Limerick Motorway, the O'Connell Street Urban Renewal Project and many others. The Budget would strengthen the Council's commitment to Climate Change 2020 targets, addresses Public lighting innovation and enable it to address the CFRAMS and Flood Relief Schemes.

Operationally

The Budget would allow the Council to meet its commitments to continue the delivery of essential and statutory services in Housing Maintenance, Roads, Libraries and Fire Services. It would allow the Council to be efficient, effective and committed to providing services that would underpin a growing and dynamic Limerick.

Staffing

Recruitment had increased during 2019 to fill priority positions because of retirements and promotions. The Workforce Planning Programme would be progressed further during 2020 to further ensure that the structures were in place to fully support effective service delivery. The professionalism, commitment and determination of staff to react to unforeseen events was again demonstrated in 2019 during the many storms and weather events that had to be dealt with.

The Budget also made clear the Council's Capital Works Programme for the next three years 2020-2022 which was included with the Budget documentation. This programme, which was wide-ranging over the 3-year period for public projects for Limerick, was projected to cost €703 million, which was funded from, in the main, central grants and loans.

The Chief Executive stated that the draft Budget 2020 - which included significant feedback from Members in its development - had committed to further improve service delivery. The Members' decision to vary the rate of Local Property Tax had facilitated this commitment. No increase in commercial rates was proposed.

Finally, the Chief Executive thanked the Mayor and Elected Members for all their assistance and guidance in framing the Budget. He also thanked his colleagues on the Management Team and their Senior Teams for developing the Budget and sometimes for sharing the pain with him to make a balanced Budget. He said he would particularly like to thank all the Finance Team for the dedicated work and support to all during the process which, he was sure, the Members would agree was exemplary.

In conclusion, he recommended the draft Budget, as presented, to the Members for adoption.

It was unanimously agreed that the Chief Executive's Report on the Draft Budget 2020, as circulated to Members, would be read into the Minutes of the Meeting as follows:

"Introduction

The Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31st December 2020 has been prepared, circulated to Members and public notice of the Budget Meeting placed in the press, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

Circular Fin 07/2019 refers to the prescribed period that applies for the holding of the 2020 Budget meeting for Local Authorities as follows; 1st November 2019 to 30th November 2019. It was agreed by the Members at the September Council meeting to hold the statutory Annual Budget Meeting on Friday 15th November 2019 at 10am, in the Council Chamber, Dooradoyle. Section 103 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides that the Budget must be adopted within a period of 14 days beginning on the day on which the local authority budget meeting meets. The Budget therefore must be adopted by 29th November 2019.

Budget Process

The budget process for the preparation, consideration and adoption of the budget requires statutory compliance with a number of steps, which can be summarised as follows:

Step 1 - Decision by the Council on the adjustment factor to the Local Property Tax (LPT) following a public consultation process. This decision was made at the Council Meeting on the 23rd September.

Step 2 - Allocation of the General Municipal/ Metropolitan Allocation (GMA). The Draft Budgetary Plan was considered at the following meetings:

Metropolitan District of Limerick	18 th October
Adare / Rathkeale Municipal District	23 rd October
Cappamore / Kilmallock Municipal District	17 th October
Newcastle West Municipal District	23 rd October

Step 3 - Consultation with the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) and adoption of the Draft Budget by Council. Budget Strategy presented to CPG Meeting held on the 16th September with further meetings held on the 14th October and 11th November. The Statutory Budget meeting is scheduled for 15th November with a budget workshop with Councillors to be held on the 11th November.

Step 4 - Consideration and adoption of the schedule of Municipal works by each of the Metropolitan / Municipal Districts. These meetings will be convened in early 2020 following the adoption of the Budget.

Step 5 - Consideration and adoption of the Service Delivery Plan. The 2020 Service Delivery Plan will be presented to Council at the January 2020 Council meeting.

Through consultation with the Corporate Policy Group and consideration of the views of Council as expressed through the different stages of the budgetary process, in particular as expressed through the meetings of the Municipal/ Metropolitan Districts, the budget as presented considers this feedback in a reasoned and balanced manner.

At the Statutory Budget Meeting, the Members will be asked to make the following decisions:

- Adopt the Budget with or without amendment
- Determine the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV)
- Determine the proportion of Rates Refund applicable on vacant commercial premises.

National Economic Outlook

The external economic environment has become more challenging. Rising trade tensions, wider geopolitical developments and the prospect of a disorderly Brexit have raised uncertainty and, accordingly, dampened investment. In addition, growth in global trade has slowed considerably, partly because of the softening in investment (trade in investment goods is an important component of world trade). Country-specific developments are also contributing to the global slowdown: a fading fiscal stimulus in the US, difficulties in the auto sector in Germany and the slowing Chinese economy. The year-long trend of softening growth is set to persist into 2020. In the euro area, incoming data have disappointed over the summer and have prompted a re-starting of the 'Quantitative Easing' programme by the European Central Bank. Many of these factors are inter-related and, at least at this stage, appear unlikely to subside in the near-term.

The UK exit out of the EU will dent economic activity in the final quarter of this year and severely impact it next year. GDP growth of just 0.7 per cent is forecast for next year, although given the unprecedented nature of a Brexit shock, the uncertainty attached to this point-estimate is much higher than normal, with risks highly skewed to the downside.

On the back of very strong export figures in the first half of the year, particularly on the services side, the Department of Finance has revised upwards its forecast for GDP growth this year to 5.5 per cent, an upward revision of just over 1½ percentage points. This projection would be closer to 6 per cent were it not for the assumed impact of a no-deal Brexit in the fourth quarter.

Table 1 below outlines the main economic and fiscal variables underlying the Department of Finance's budget for 2020.

<i>Variable - % change (unless stated)</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<i>Economic Activity</i>					
Real GDP	5.1	4.3	8.2	5.5	0.7
Real GNP	9.6	0.0	6.5	4.3	-0.1
<i>Prices</i>					
Core HICP	0.5	0.1	0.2	1.0	1.5
<i>Balance of Payments</i>					
Current account (per cent of GDP)	3.3	8.5	10.6	0.1	7.0
<i>Labour Market</i>					
Total Employment ('000)^	2,020	2,075	2,258	2,312	2,330
Employment	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.4	0.8
Unemployment (per cent)	7.9	6.3	5.8	5.2	5.7
<i>Public Finances (per cent of GDP)</i>					
General government balance	-0.7	-0.3	0.1	0.2	-0.6
Structural balance	-1.7	-1.1	0.2	-0.4	-0.4
Debt ratio (year-end)	72.8	70.1	63.5	59.3	56.5
Net debt position (year-end)	63.7	61.2	54.9	51.4	51.2

Table 1: Summary of Main Economic and Fiscal Variables (per cent change (unless stated))

Source: Department of Finance Economic and Fiscal Outlook Budget 2020, p.2

The Local Government Sector is part of General Government (as is the Local Government Fund). Own-resource Local Authority (LA) expenditure is profiled to stay broadly flat in 2020, this means that own-resource expenditure must stay in line with last year unless specific revenue raising measures are identified (i.e. increased rates, LPT, housing rents, parking fees, planning fees, library and sports facility fees, casual trading fees etc.). So, expenditure policy at the sub-General Government level will have serious implications for national fiscal policy - expenditure increases in the LA & other sectors with own resource income will have to be met by offsetting expenditure reductions in voted expenditure to ensure compliance with fiscal rules.

Local Outlook:

2019 has seen many significant milestones occur for Limerick City and County as we continue our ambitious plans to develop Limerick into the future. The launch of Limerick's new brand in 2020 will help win further indigenous and foreign investment and reflect its resurgence as a thriving economic and visitor destination.

Tourism will be a key priority for Limerick City and County Council throughout 2020. Elected members have facilitated this focus through an increase in the Local Property Tax. There will be a significant focus on the upgrading of the Great Southern Greenway, the promotion of Lough Gur and the implementation of the Limerick Tourism Development strategy throughout 2020 with further improvements also planned in Limerick's Medieval Quarter and the development plan for Limerick city as a gateway to the Wild Atlantic Way. We will also progress the RRDF funded West Limerick Tourism Gateway/ Fullers Folly Project in Newcastle West.

In 2020, we will assist in the planning for the JP McManus Pro-Am in Adare in and continue to prepare for the 2026 Ryder Cup in conjunction with key stakeholders.

We will maximise funding opportunities for rural Limerick through various Government schemes and continue to advance the dereliction, vacancy and reuse programme including advancing key public realm projects through the additional resources provided by the Local Property Tax.

A key area of focus will be to provide advice to our communities on grant schemes and other Council led support measures including facilitating the work of the LCDC, securing maximum level of funding from funding calls. We will continue to advance initiatives on Age Friendly and Integration.

The local authority will invest in our festival and events through the implementation of a new Festivals and Events strategy to be prepared in 2020. A key event for next year will be the European Expo which was supported by a Festival Innovation Fund created by the members in 2019.

Next year, we will strengthen the role of our libraries, gallery and museum. We will also prepare a new Sports and Recreation Facilities strategy in 2020 to enhance the quality of life of all our citizens.

As a local authority, we continue to ensure that the housing challenge is being addressed in a focused and concerted manner across our Build, Buy and Lease programmes. With a focus on the delivery of targets under the 'Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness', we are looking at ways of improving our processes and procedures to bring greater efficiency and value for money in the services we provide to our tenants and to the wider citizen. Limerick City and County Council will work towards providing the enabling infrastructure for key sites in our ownership to allow for the eventual delivery of affordable homes in Limerick through Serviced Sites Funding. Strong collaboration with Approved

Housing Bodies will continue as a means of enhancing delivery mechanisms while also providing additional services to our tenants.

The roll-out of the planned maintenance programme will commence in 2020 and will include a pilot maintenance grant scheme for tenants in the Kilmallock area. A single point of contact for vacant properties allows the council to gather data to get the most up to date and accurate information about vacant units and their status. There will also be increased resources in 2020 for estate management in partnership with tenants and residents committees. The Single Differential Rent Scheme has been an important step to ensure fair calculation of rents and a focus will remain on its implementation throughout 2020.

Compliance with NZEB (Near Zero Energy Building) means that our works will, in time, result in a more sustainable and energy efficient housing stock. As works are completed, this will lead to a reduction in the running costs for our tenants and a reduced dependency on fossil fuels. An energy efficient house has also proved to provide better comfort and living standards.

After six years of unprecedented growth in which Limerick delivered more than 17,000 jobs, the Limerick Economic Monitor was established as a barometer to give us twice yearly progress reports as to where we are, benchmarking us against our local and indeed national targets as per Limerick 2030 and Project Ireland 2040.

Limerick's economy continues to perform well, positioning itself as an affordable and attractive alternative to Dublin, in spite of challenges on the horizon in the shape of Brexit and a possible international slowdown.

On the jobs front, more than 1,500 roles have been announced for Limerick since January 2019. Companies which have made important announcements during the year include world brands such as Becton Dickinson, Fundrock and major accounting firms have further invested in the region. Irish Water also announced the establishment of its national laboratory services in Limerick creating up to 120 jobs.

The eagerly awaited development of the Opera site, the University of Limerick's €8m investment plan for a city centre campus and the increasing workforce of global firms will help to improve the city centre and facilitate its resurgence.

A central pillar for Limerick's continued resurgence will be Limerick Twenty Thirty Strategic Development DAC. This time last year, with two years behind the project, we looked forward to a big 12 months in 2019 for this special purpose Company established to develop key strategic but disused Limerick sites into engines of economic growth. It has been that and more but the momentum is only gathering, with 2020 set to be another major year for the Limerick Twenty Thirty project.

Before we close the 2019 chapter, it's worth recalling that, with Troy Studios already up and running, the first major build under Limerick Twenty Thirty, Gardens International, was completed and opened. The 112,000 sq. ft development was finished to tenant fit-out stage

after an 18 month build. The project has been built to LEED Gold standards - among the top international benchmarks for sustainability.

Further evidence of the momentum being gathered with the Limerick Twenty Thirty programme was a planning application lodged by Limerick City and County Council for the biggest project in its portfolio, the Opera Site, with work on this monumental project for Limerick destined to commence in 2020, subject to planning.

The Opera Site, which was acquired by Limerick City Council in 2011 will be transformational for the city and region. With an oral hearing pending, the Opera Site will be developed over a six-year period, starting with a six-month demolition programme in 2020. The demolition and build will cost circa €180m and take shape over a six-year period. It is fully funded thanks to finance facilities from the European Investment Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank.

The site will be capable of employing up to 3,000 people across a 450,000 sq ft campus accommodation and, like Gardens International, it will again have a high bar in terms of sustainability and architectural standing, with the project being developed to LEED Gold and Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) standards.

2020 will also see further steps taken on the Cleeves Riverside Quarter project, with the appointment of consultants to assist in its development pending. The project will then move onto the actual planning stage, with a planning application targeted for 2021.

The Cleeves Riverside Quarter is an iconic site of approximately 10 acres located on the northern bank of the River Shannon in Limerick city centre. It is zoned 'City Centre Area' in the City Development Plan, and deemed suitable for a number of uses including commercial, residential and educational. In terms of scale, Cleeves will be one of the biggest city centre developments outside of Dublin.

Next year will also see progress on another key project in the Limerick Twenty Thirty programme, the Mungret Park development. Currently at master-planning stage, a planning application is set to be lodged next year for the first phase of this residential project.

Innovate Limerick continues to extend the range of activities at ENGINE to include the PROSPER indicative which is run in conjunction with the Guinness Enterprise Centre in Dublin. Plans are now being prepared to extend ENGINE by 1,500 sq metres to accommodate the Digital Collaboration Centre, which will facilitate greater interaction between multinational and indigenous companies based in the region.

With a newly appointed regional film manager in place, the film sector can make a significant contribution to the region's economic growth going forward. Innovate has also purchased a premises on the Main Street in Abbeyfeale and the design team have been appointed to convert that building into a much needed E-Hub for the town.

2020 will see the launch of Limerick's new brand to help win further indigenous and foreign investment and reflect its resurgence as a thriving economic and visitor destination.

The Mid West National Road Design Office continues to progress key major infrastructural projects in the region in partnership with the participating local authorities and Transport Infrastructure Ireland. Some of the schemes currently being progressed by the office include the M/N20 Cork to Limerick, Foynes to Limerick (Including Adare Bypass), N21 Newcastle West Bypass, N21 Abbeyfeale Bypass, N24 Cahir to Limerick Junction, N19 Shannon Airport Access Road in addition to other major, minor, pavement and safety schemes.

The Council, in conjunction with the National Transport Authority, has progressed the development of the transport strategy for Limerick with completion expected in 2020. This strategy will examine how sustainable transport can be delivered in Limerick and will guide investment decisions. It will build on previous transport studies carried out and will set out proposed actions and measures for delivering infrastructural development and policy.

The Council adopted the Limerick City and County Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in July 2019 in accordance with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. This will be added to in 2020 with the development of a Climate Mitigation Strategy, as required by the Climate Action Plan 2019.

Provision has been made in budget 2020 to advance studies and schemes which will allow the Council to prepare to meet the targets set out under national climate change policy, including building the resilience of the organisation to respond to climate change events, the promotion of green infrastructure, increased energy efficiency and emissions reduction targets, fleet improvement, building performance, promotion of sustainable and alternative transport modes.

In recognition of its commitment to environmental and sustainability issues, Limerick was awarded the title of European Green Leaf City 2020 along with Mechelen in Belgium. During 2020 the Council will organise and host a number of environmental events aimed at raising and awareness and providing exemplars of best practice around the Biodiversity and Land use, Climate Change and Energy Performance, Sustainable Urban Transport, Waste and the Circular Economy, Air Quality and Noise and Water.

Budget Strategy & Objectives

The Draft Budget has been prepared on the principle of a “balanced budget” based on the overall level of resources available to the Council and the requirement to meet statutory, contractual, legal and other obligations. It incorporates the decisions made by the Council in relation to the Local Property Tax and General Municipal/ Metropolitan Allocations. Under the Local Government Act, 2001 as amended, the Draft Budget is required to set out the expenditure necessary to carry out the functions of the Council and the income estimated to accrue to the Council.

The key objectives of the 2020 Budget are set out in the Table below:

Key Objectives of Budget 2020

- **Community Development Directorate to provide a stronger focus on a number of interrelated areas around support to communities:**
 - Engagement and advice to communities on grant schemes and other Council led supports
 - Supporting communities through the delivery of a range of Age Friendly, Education, Integration and Health and wellbeing related programmes
 - Revitalisation of our urban areas & villages through a continued focus on addressing dereliction, vacancy & delivering public realm improvements
 - Delivering a cultural and arts programme for the benefit of the people of Limerick and visitors to our City and County.
 - Deliver a programme of festivals and events through the implementation of the proposed Festival and Event Strategy.
 - Delivering Tourism Development
 - Strengthening the role of our libraries, gallery and museum to enhance the quality of life for the people of Limerick
- **Dedicated Housing Development directorate with priority on the following areas**
 - Implement Planned Maintenance Programme
 - Introduce Single Point of Contact for vacant properties
 - Increased Resources for Estate Management and maintain resources in the area of tenancy enforcement.
 - Implement single Differential Rent Scheme
 - Increased resources in the area of Homelessness
 - Deliver on targets set out under Rebuilding Ireland
 - Working with Approved Housing Bodies as a key delivery mechanism.
- **Economic Development:**
 - Continue the increased pace of economic investment/ job creation in the City and County
 - Launch and implement Limerick's new brand identity
 - Continue to deliver on Limerick 2030 economic & spatial strategy
 - Expand Innovate Limerick projects and support LEO programme for SME sector
 - Lead a digital strategy that will lay the foundation for a "Smart Limerick Region".
 - Ensure that Limerick is at the forefront in targeting European funding and investment.
- **Physical Development:**
 - To continue to invest in the rural and urban infrastructure through the delivery of the 2020 schedule of municipal district works
 - Progress key infrastructure projects to facilitate the continued economic growth in Limerick and the Mid-West
 - To continue to work with the National Transport Authority and Clare County Council to complete the Limerick / Shannon Metropolitan transport Strategy.
 - Protect the natural and built environment for Limerick City and County including the progression of the CFRAMS programme in conjunction with the OPW,
 - To continue to work towards our 2020 climate change targets and to meet the objectives of the Water Framework directive.
- **Delivery of 2020 targets as set out in Rebuilding Ireland and continue to provide a quality service while actively looking to implement innovative solutions to deliver further efficiencies.**
- **Continue to seek efficiencies in service provision, cost reduction and value for money.**

Outturn 2019

In presenting the Annual Budget for the year ended 31 December 2020 to Council, I wish to take this opportunity to summarise the financial position of Limerick City and County Council. The Annual Financial Statement of Limerick City and County Council for the year 2018 shows the accumulated balance on the Revenue Account is in a credit position of €823,400. I have reviewed the up to date position and I am satisfied that every effort will be made to break-even on the Revenue Account for 2019; however there is pressure on a number of income heads and ongoing controls on expenditure are in place. The impact of the windfarm appeals has been highlighted to members during 2019 and this could impact adversely in achieving a balanced outturn. The 2020 draft Budget reflects the need to continue a strong financial management ethos while making every effort to meet the ever increasing demands on the services of Limerick City and County Council.

Analysis of Expenditure Requirements 2020

The total estimated expenditure included in the Draft Budget for 2020 amounts to €825.408million, an increase of €135.824 million on the adopted figure for 2019. The growth in the HAP transactional Shared Service Centre accounts for the majority of this increase. As this expenditure is matched by an increase in corresponding income, it has no net effect on the Budgetary Provisions. The following Table 2 depicts Revenue expenditure by Division.

Division	Draft Budget 2020	Adopted Budget 2019
A - Housing & Building	€39,690,353	€35,445,918
A - HAP Shared Service Centre	€641,786,083	€518,781,747
B - Road Transport & Safety	€44,249,403	€39,420,857
C - Water Services	€15,911,668	€14,665,694
D - Development Mgt	€20,770,097	€19,814,221
E - Environmental Services	€33,329,584	€32,314,238
F - Recreation & Amenity	€14,458,951	€13,948,846
G - Agri, Ed, Health & Welfare	€1,380,672	€1,369,896
H - Misc Services	€13,831,452	€13,823,171
	€825,408,263	€689,584,588

Table 2: Analysis of Expenditure by Division

The following chart gives a breakdown of expenditure by each division.

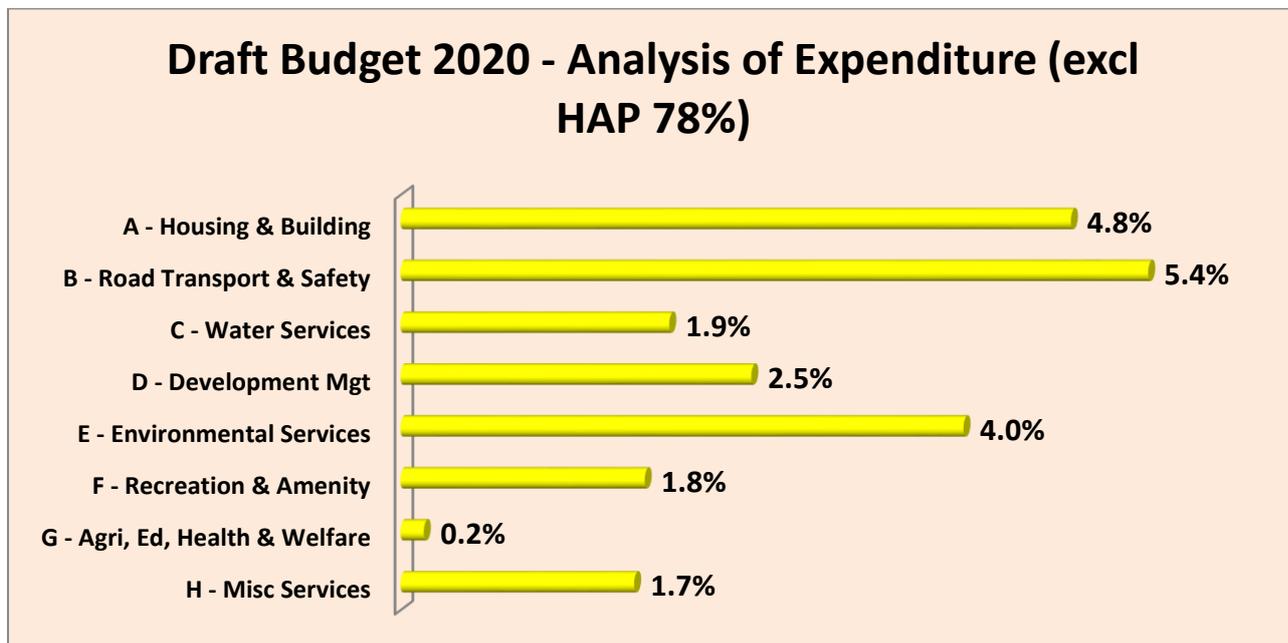


Chart 1: Analysis of split of Expenditure (excl HAP) by Division

The following bar chart shows the estimated expenditure for Draft Budget 2020 for each Division, with comparative figures for 2019:

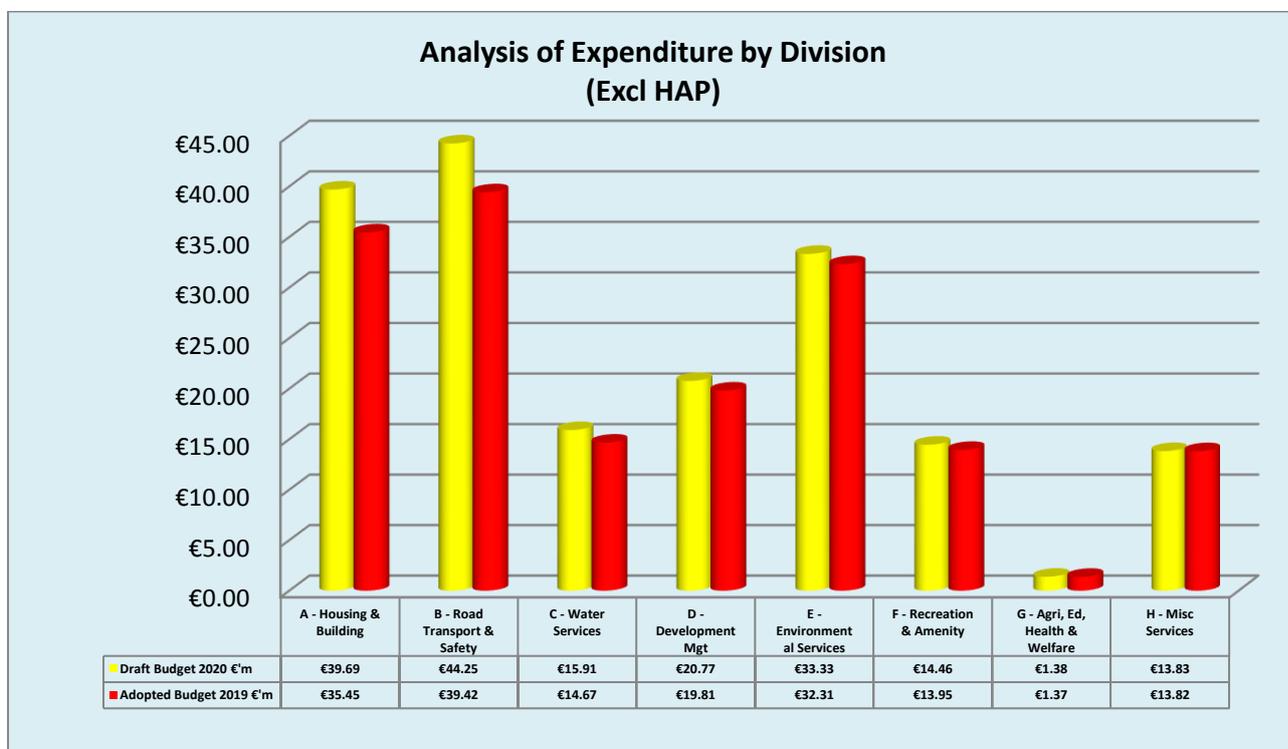


Chart 2: Analysis of Expenditure (excl HAP) by Division - Draft Budget 2020 versus Budget 2019

Analysis of Income 2020

The level of expenditure shown above, at €825.408 million, will be financed from the following sources:

Source	Amount
1. Local Property Tax	€19,914,250
2. Commercial Rates	€58,567,823
3. Grants & Subsidies (net of HAP)	€52,451,473
4. Goods & Services (net of HAP)	€52,735,632
Sub Total Income (Excluding HAP)	€183,669,178
1. HAP Differential Rent	€153,609,716
2. HAP Subsidy from DHPCLG	€488,129,369
Sub Total HAP	€641,739,085
Total including HAP	€825,408,263

Table 3: Analysis of Draft Budget 2020 Income

The following Pie chart highlights the % split by income category excluding HAP.

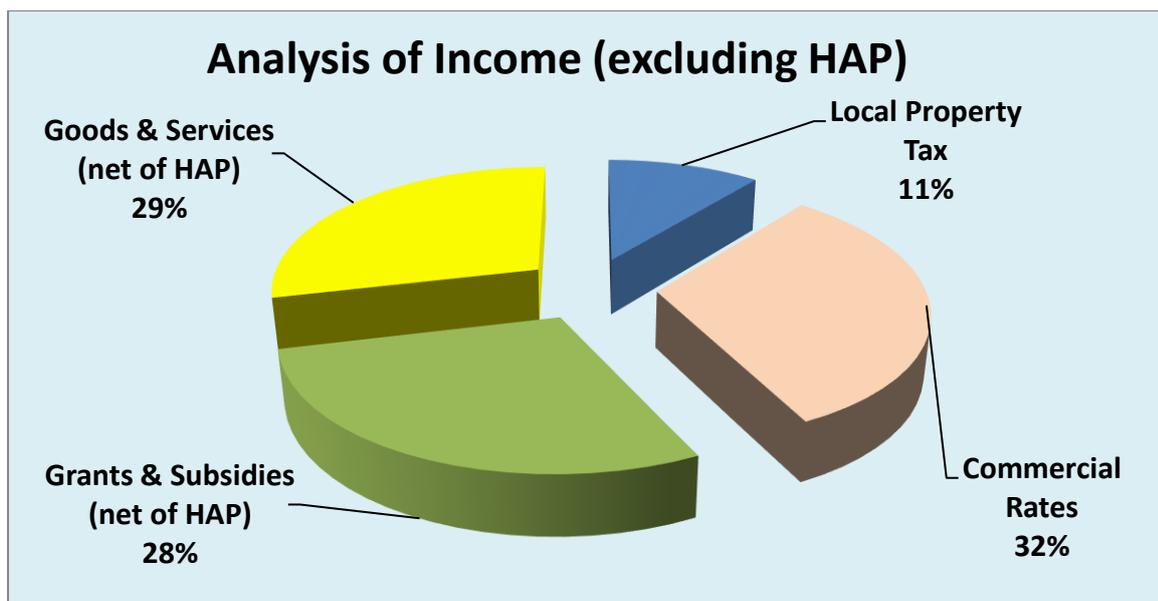


Chart 3: Analysis of Draft Budget 2020 Income (excluding HAP)

72% of the Council's income (excluding HAP) is now generated locally through Commercial Rates (32%), LPT (11%) and goods & services (29%).

Comparative figures for Budgets 2020 and 2019 are shown hereunder.

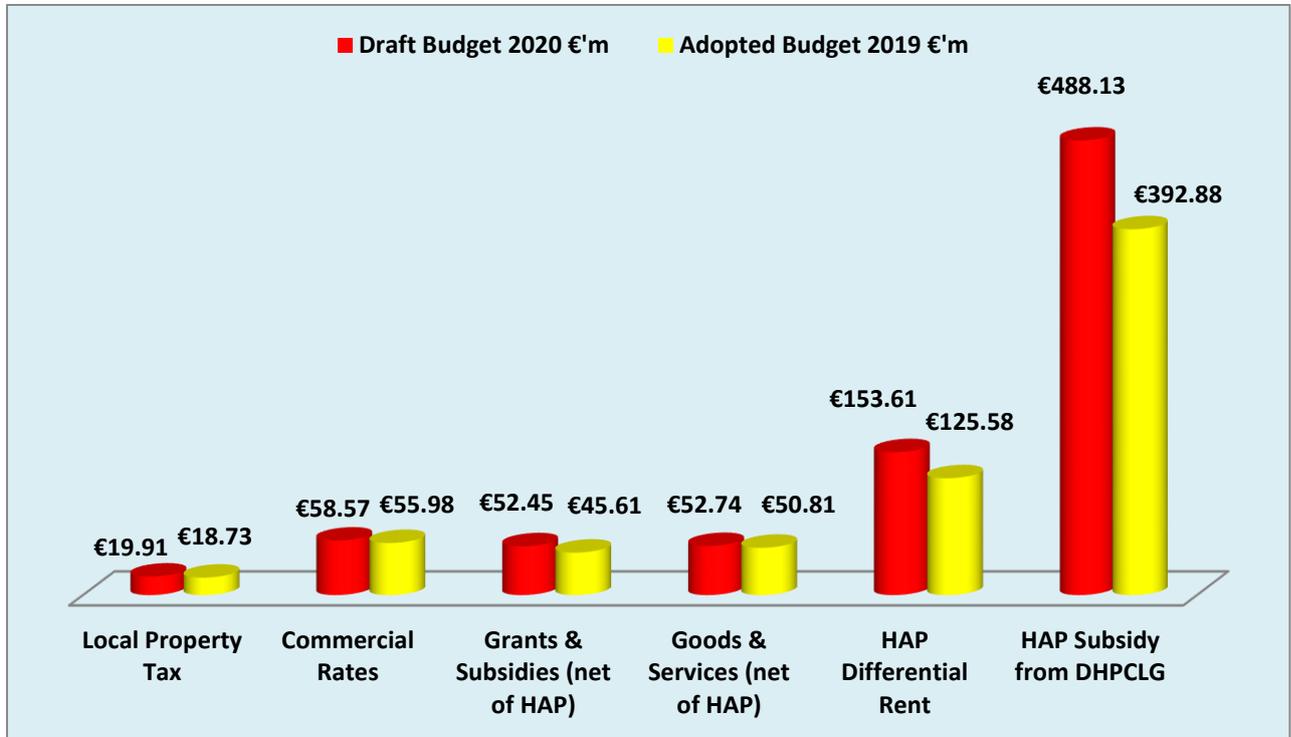


Chart 4: Analysis of Income: Draft Budget 2020 v's Budget 2019

Local Property Tax Allocation 2020

Local Property Tax (LPT) is now a key funding source for Local Government replacing the General Purpose Grant funding allocation. The initial allocation under this funding heading was confirmed as €17,554,464. The basis of this funding is an allocation of 80% of the LPT collected from property owners in the City and County and retained by the Local Authority with the remaining 20% being paid into an equalisation fund from which payments are made to Counties not achieving a level of funding equivalent to the 2013 General Purpose Grant (GPG) through their own LPT receipts.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 and associated Regulations permits the Members of the Council to vary the Rate by a maximum increase or decrease of 15%. The Council decided to adjust the LPT rate upwards by 15% in 2020 equating to an increase of €2,359,791.

The 2020 allocation from the Local Property Tax and the calculation provided by the DHPLG on the basis of this allocation is set out in **Table 4** below:

<i>Limerick City and County Council - 2020 LPT Allocation</i>	
LPT 100%	€15,731,940
LPT 20% to Equalisation Fund	(€3,146,388)
=> LPT 80% Retained Locally	€12,585,552
Distribution from Equalisation Fund	€4,968,911
Original LPT Allocation	€17,554,464
15% increase in LPT rate	€2,359,791
Revised LPT Allocation	€19,914,255

Table 4: LPT Reconciliation

The 15% LPT variation for 2020 of €2,359,791 has been allocated to provide additional resources for the delivery of the following services as follows:

<i>Svc</i>	<i>Service Description</i>	<i>LPT 15% Allocation 2020</i>
B03 & B04	<i>Own Resource element of Local & Regional Roads including Capital Investment New Plant to Deliver efficient Local resources</i>	€748k
E0601	<i>Street cleaning</i>	€220k
B0601 & B0602	<i>Traffic Management</i>	€200k
D0901	<i>Urban and rural Regeneration</i>	€550k
F0301	<i>Maintenance of Parks, Pitches & Open Spaces</i>	€140k
F0201	<i>Library Service</i>	€50k
E1101	<i>Fire Service</i>	€100k
D05	<i>Additional GMA for 2020</i>	€200k
D0501	<i>Tourism Development & Promotion</i>	€151k
Total		€2,359k

Table 5: Allocation of additional resources

The additional 7.5% Local Property Tax on 2019 levels has enabled the Council to have an additional €1.15m for Budget 2020 above Budget 2019 which is used to provide additional funding for capital investment in new plant to deliver efficient local resources (€400k), enable a greater focus on Urban and Rural Regeneration (€550k), and provide an additional amount for General Municipal Allocation (GMA) (€200k).

The additional monies for Urban and Rural Regeneration has enabled the provision of a Trade and Investment executive, Festival and events co-ordinator, provision of technical engineering expertise to ensure Urban and Rural Regeneration projects are managed, and also provide additional staff resource to the Museum to enable 7 day a week opening.

Commercial Rates

Commercial Rates is a significant contributor to the total budgeted income for the Council and it is vital to the level of service delivery that income from this source is maximised. In this respect it is critically important that the Valuation Office reverts promptly with new valuations during 2020. Limerick City and County Council will continue to ensure that all commercial properties in the City and County are included on the rates records and are properly rated.

The Council continues to improve its collection percentages across all the major income headings. In that respect engagement with rate-payers with a view to addressing arrears will continue to be a priority during 2020. In circumstances where there is no engagement, the Council will pursue the outstanding arrears via the legal route.

The Valuation Office carried out a full revaluation of commercial properties in Limerick City and County areas in 2014. The principal of the revaluation process exercise was that it is revenue neutral ((i.e. no financial loss or gain to the Local Authority). Limerick City and County Council has, however experienced significant erosion of its commercial rates income as a result of these appeals with a loss to date of €1.08m per annum. There are seven outstanding appeals from Windfarms to be adjudicated by the Valuation Tribunal which could result in further financial losses from reduced Commercial Rates of €706k per annum (arrears of €3.5m), bringing potential losses to €1.7m per annum. Limerick City and County Council are the first Local Authority to object to a decision of the Valuation Tribunal

This financial loss in Commercial Rates for 2020 due to the windfarms' appeals, has been part mitigated by the Council receiving some Rates buoyancy and an increase in Commercial Rates income due to Irish Water now being rated as a global valuation utility and accounted for in Commercial Rates rather than as compensation from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Vacant Property Scheme 2020

Section 31 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides for an amendment to rating law in relation to the refund of rates on vacant properties. This change now gives the power to the members of local authorities to vary the level of rates refunds that apply in individual local electoral areas within the overall administrative area of the local authority.

Article 29 of the Local Government (Financial & Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014 provides that the decision to alter the rate of refund should be decided at the statutory annual budget meeting and that the rate of refund decided in respect of the relevant local electoral area shall apply to eligible persons for the year to which the budget relates. The budget has been framed on the basis the refund rates on vacant property noted in **Table 6** below.

The following amended vacant property scheme is proposed to continue in 2020:

Band	% Refund
Up to €2,856 Annual Rate Demand	100%
€2,857 to €11,376 Annual Rate Demand (with payment of 50% required)	50%
€11,377 to €57,024 Annual Rate Demand (with payment of 75% required)	25%
Over €57,025 Annual Rate Demand (with payment of 90% required)	10%

Table 6: Proposed Vacant Property Scheme 2020

Small and Medium Business Support Scheme 2020 (SME Scheme)

The proposed Small and Medium Business Support scheme will pay a financial support to occupiers of commercial properties with a total annual commercial rate bill of up to and including €25,000 but not less than €1 in 2020. The proposed % support for 2020 rates is 9% subject to a maximum refund of €1,000 which will be subject to a number of terms and conditions, including 25% of arrears must be paid in year 1 to qualify for the scheme with a payment plan in place over years 2 to 4 for the remaining arrears.

Tourism Sector Support Scheme 2020

The Proposed Tourism Sector Support Scheme for 2020 will be a financial support/reduction to occupiers of commercial properties directly linked to the Tourism Sector. In order to qualify, the total annual Commercial Rates liability must be in excess of €25,000 (Businesses with a Rate Demand less than €25,000 already qualify for the SME Scheme 2020) and is subject to a number of terms and conditions. The support grant payment which is aimed specifically at the Tourism and Hospitality Sector will be set at 4% of the total Rates, including arrears, up to a maximum grant payment of €5,000, for 2020 subject to the Scheme being approved by the Council.

Business & Retail Incentive Scheme 2020

The Proposed Business & Retail Incentive Scheme for 2020 will continue to be available for businesses in all towns and villages across Limerick City and County Council. The scheme is intended to address property vacancy rates, improve streetscapes and to support the business community.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Transactional Shared Service Centre

The Housing Assistant Payment (HAP) is the principal platform for underpinning the provision of housing support in Ireland. The availability of HAP means that all Local Authorities can provide housing support to many more households with a long-term housing need, including many long-term Rent Supplement recipients. HAP is delivered across 31 local authorities in the State. It is supported by the shared service centre operated on behalf of the local government sector by Limerick City and County Council. Total annual expenditure on HAP is expected to be in excess of €950 million by 2021. There are currently over 51,000 tenancies supported nationally.

HAP is particularly attractive for low income households, as they can work full time and they pay the local authority a weekly rent contribution based on their ability to pay. The HAPSSC will process circa 15,000 new tenancies in 2020 and process €614million in payments to HAP landlords and collect €150million in differential rent from HAP tenants. The HAPSSC which is city centre based currently employs 74 staff.

The key business processes delivered on behalf of the Local Authorities by the HAP Shared Services Centre are (1) Tenancy Processing, (2) Weekly Tenant Rent Run, (3) Monthly Landlord Payment, (4) Tax Clearance Certificate Compliance, (5) Amendments, (6) Debt Management, (7) Recoupment Management and (8) Stakeholder Reporting. The HAP Shared Services Centre is ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System certified.

General Municipal/ Metropolitan Allocation 2020

Circular Fin 08/2015 referred to the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) (Amendment) Regulations (S.I.363 of 2015), which amends the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014 by providing that the meeting at which Municipal/ Metropolitan members consider the draft budgetary plan must conclude no later than 10 days prior to the local authority budget meeting.

Following the adoption of the budget a schedule of proposed works of maintenance and repairs to be carried out during 2020 in each Municipal/ Metropolitan District will be prepared for consideration and adoption by the Municipal/ Metropolitan District Members.

The draft budget has included a general Municipal/ Metropolitan allocation of €1.403m in total for district members, which will provide a focus and clarity as regards how the elected members want to account for the expending of monies within their area.

Workforce

Recruitment of staff within the Organisation will continue and in particular will focus on the replacement of staff following retirements, promotions and departures.

As a major employer in the region, it is important that we provide employment opportunities to the communities we serve. In this regard, an Apprenticeship Programme will be launched in 2020. The Graph below shows our overall numbers at present and the number of retired staff, which will rise significantly towards the end of 2019.

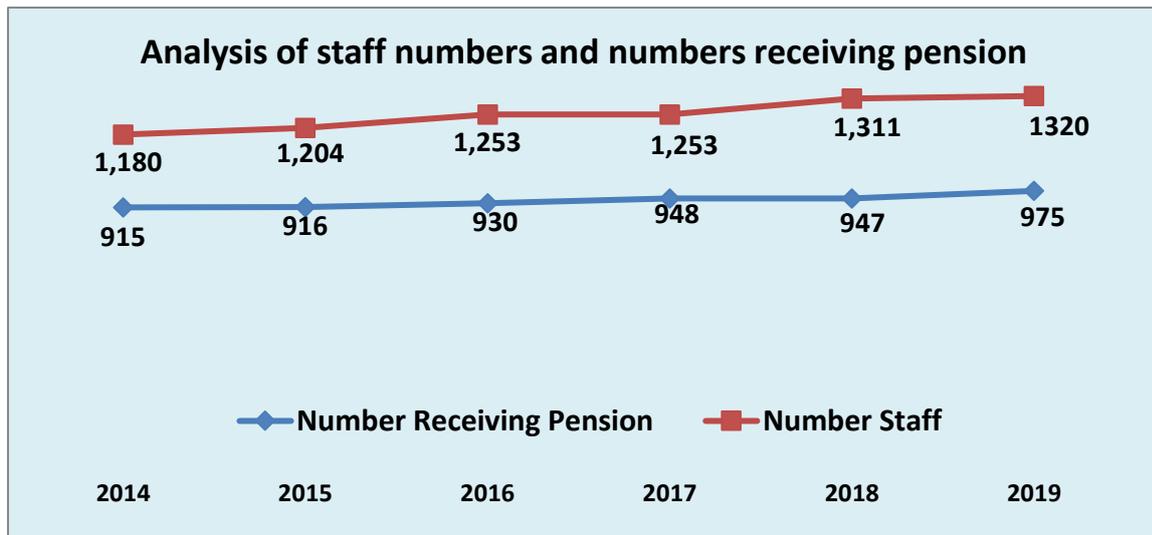


Chart 5: Analysis of staff numbers and number receiving pensions 2014-2019

Business Improvement Department:

Our Public Service 2020 provided a policy framework to build on previous reforms and Limerick City and County Council has a dedicated Business Improvement team to embed this framework into our organization.

The Business Improvement department provides support to the organization in the assessment of service delivery for efficiency and effectiveness. Using a recognized improvement approach, the team assists in mapping and standardizing processes to remove any waste ensuring we are producing value for money services that provide the best customer experience. Involving the public in the design of their services is key in producing accessible services that meet an increasing demand to be delivered digitally but also in more traditional forms. Customer engagement is sought online and during citizen feedback sessions and it is this citizen participation that will continue to shape our services.

Data is also critical in informing our ability to make evidence based decisions and our internal CRM system is connected to our Service Catalogue which allows us to assess the demand for our services, see where there are gaps and allows us to be proactive in deciding budgets and resource allocation that will meet our citizen demands. The Business Improvement Department have also launched Cora, our cloud based project management system. This system will provide the organization with project status and financial reporting data that

assists in monitoring progress, budgets and ensures our priorities are aligned with our Corporate Goals.

Irish Water

The Budget provides for the ongoing Service Level Agreement (SLA) arrangements with Irish Water as Limerick City and County Council provides water services on behalf of the national water authority. The Budget includes provision for the expenditure associated with the operation of the SLA and for the recoupment of these costs from Irish Water.

Capital Budget 2020-2022

In accordance with Section 135 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended the Local Government Reform Act 2014, please find attached a report on the programme of capital projects proposed by Limerick City and County Council for the 3 years 2020 to 2022.

A key element of the Capital Programme over the coming years is delivering on the Limerick 2030 plan. Council members agreed to the raising of a working capital loan in 2014 of €32m and in 2017 approved loans of €170m from the European Investment Bank and Council of Europe Development Bank to help fund this programme. Also, The Rural Regeneration & Development Fund and the Urban Regeneration & Development Fund will provide funding opportunities for the Council to develop strategic projects.

Given the fact that we are proposing allocations over 3 years, it would be unrealistic to suggest that these allocations are definitive and are subject to funding being available in future years. Capital projects by their very nature are flexible rolling plans which involve an annual review and possible adjustment. Below please find a summary of potential spend and source of funding for the 3 year capital plan 2020 to 2022.

Capital Expenditure 2020 -2022	Grant funded	Loan funded	Development Levy Funded	Revenue Funded	Other (Land Sales / Contributors)
€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
702.91	529.13	139.52	11.74	7.56	14.96

Table 7: Summary Capital Plan 2020-2022

Chart 6 profiles the Capital Expenditure for each of the three years:

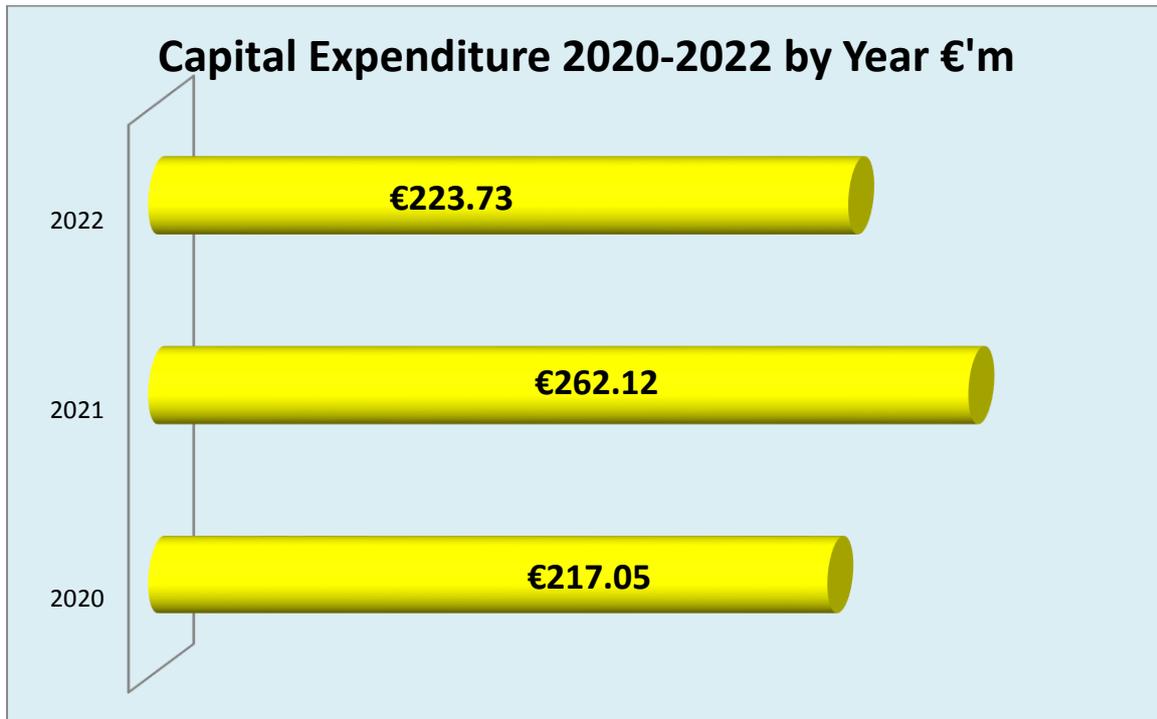


Chart 6: Summary Capital Plan 2020-2022 by year

Conclusion

Limerick City and County Council will in the coming weeks adopt a new Corporate Plan for the period 2019 to 2024 which will set out the Council's ambition to continue to position Limerick as the driver for the mid-west and to build on the foundations of the renaissance that have unfolded in Limerick.

The Council, since its inception in 2014, has positioned itself as a proactive organisation to serve the people of Limerick. The transition to a directly elected mayor with executive powers is a fundamental change in local government and will again require significant cultural change within the organisation.

The proposed Draft Budget for 2020 will maintain existing services to a high standard and ensure that Limerick City and County Council fulfils all its current statutory and regulatory obligations.

The demand for services across Limerick continues to grow and this is matched by public expectation. Our Customer Service is connected to our service catalogue, which allows us to access the demand for services, see where the gaps are and allow us to be proactive in allocating budgets and staffing levels that align with our citizen demands.

Limerick City and County Council will also facilitate economic development by progressing key capital projects including Urban and Village Renewal while also marketing Limerick as a great place to visit and do business.

During 2019, the Council again had to react to unforeseen events, which demonstrated the professionalism, commitment and determination of staff to manage the impact of these events.

The draft 2020 budget has been prepared with no proposed increase in Commercial Rates ARV (Annual Rate on Valuation), and reflects the decision by elected members to increase rate of Local Property Tax (LPT) by a further 7.5% for 2020 on the 2019 LPT levels. This increase will enable the Council to further improve service delivery.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Mayor and the Elected Members for their assistance and support, particularly the Members of the Corporate Policy Group in preparing this budget.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Management Team and their own teams for their commitment and hard work in preparing this document. The coming year will again be challenging but offers significant opportunities.

I look forward to the full support of the Members at the Statutory Budget Meeting to be held Friday, 15th November 2019.”

The Mayor stated that the Deputy Chief Executive would provide an overview of the draft Revenue Account for 2019 and the proposed 3-year Capital programme. Following this, he would go through each Division in detail with a summary update of the corresponding Capital programmes.

Following Deputy Chief Executives overview, the Mayor confirmed that this concluded the review of all Divisions within the Revenue Account and the Members would be afforded the opportunity for questions and answers in relation to each division.

The Mayor confirmed that this concluded the review of all Divisions within the Revenue Account. He then asked for a Proposer for the draft Budget, as presented.

Councillor Sheahan (J)

Councillor Sheahan (J), on behalf of the Fine Gael Group, welcomed the first budget of the new council and referred to the prosperity that the City & County had experienced over the last 5 years. Councillor Sheahan referred to the challenges that the Council will face in the next term but will continue to act on behalf of the constituents and allocate the available resources accordingly. Councillor Sheahan referred to the capital expenditure for the 3year programme of €702.91m with expenditure of €217.05m proposed for next year and the draft Revenue Budget for 2020 is set at a total of €825.4m. He stated that this is the first year that the Council’s budget including Revenue and Capital exceeds €1 billion. Councillor Sheahan referred to the national housing and homelessness crisis and welcomed the additional

Homeless provision of €1.8m increase to a total of €6.7m. He welcomed the overall with increases in Housing Maintenance with a Housing Maintenance Budget now set at €11.22m which also includes provision for planned maintenance loan of €15m over a 4 year period (€621k) to allow for proactive upgrade of the housing stock.

Councillor Sheahan welcomed the increase of €4.83 in the Roads Budget and year on year to a total Budget of €44.25m with increases in National Primary Roads & allocation of €1.2m based on 2019 allocations & €2.8m increase in Local and Regional Roads due to Grant increases with increases in Roads own resources allocation of €260k for Draft Budget 2020. Councillor Sheahan emphasised the importance of maintaining public amenities.

Councillor Sheahan referred to the climate change and the need for the council to be proactive and referred to the additional provision in the budget for a Public Lighting Loan for installation of energy efficient LED lighting and acknowledged the work of the work of the Climate Action, Biodiversity & Environment SPC council to reduce our carbon footprint.

The Council's Budget for 2020 has also included provisions to include Noise Action Plan €15,000, Air Quality Monitoring €14,000, Contribution to CFRAMS €35,000, Climate Action Change contribute of €50,000.

Water is largely funded via the Irish Water Service Level Agreement with the Council and referred to the EPA report in relation to the pumping of raw sewerage into the River which is not acceptable.

Councillor Sheahan also referred to the importance of culture and festivals and the positive impact these events have on towns and villages. He also referred to the increase in Economic Development and promotion, which is vital for the continued growth of the City & County. He also referred to the additional monies allocated from the increase in the LPT to replace plant and machinery. Councillor Sheahan acknowledged the success of the Small and Medium Business Support Scheme since its introduction and commended the Council on being the first local authority to do so. Councillor Sheahan formally proposed the draft Budget as presented.

Councillor Collins (M)

Councillor Collins (M), on behalf of the Fianna Fáil Group, confirmed that it was his 15th budget since being elected in 2004 and is intrigued that year on year at the revenue growth in our budget. The 2020 expected expenditure is estimated at €825.5m. Councillor Collins acknowledged the fantastic work that has gone into the preparation of this draft Budget. I want to particularly single out Sean Coughlan Deputy Chief Executive for simplifying what can be a complex and intricate document and making himself available along with the Chief Executive to work with Councillor Collins and his FF colleagues.

Councillor Collins commended the team in Finance along with all Directors and their staff in presenting a balanced budget here today. Councillor Collins also mentioned the management

and staff members of the Municipal District offices along with the outdoor staff who do sterling work in all types of weather and often in unsociable hours.

Councillor Collins stated that the draft Budget has been prepared on the principle of a “balanced budget” based on the overall level of resources available to the Council and the requirement to meet statutory, contractual, legal and other obligations. As in previous years not every member will agree with this draft Budget today but it's imperative that we highlight the benefits with increased spending in many areas that will benefit citizens city and county wide. Limerick is dealing with a hugely increased budget this year of €825.5m up from €689.5m last year. Notwithstanding the fact that HAP Shared Services is a major part of this budget at €641.7m the overall budget is a strong indicator at how well positioned we are in attracting businesses to look towards Limerick as a serious contender in where to locate and conduct their business.

Looking at the Local Authorities key objectives Councillor Collins was pleased to see a stronger focus on communities and community support as Chairman of the LCDC, Councillor Collins see the significance of Communities. The commitment from this authority to engage and advise communities of grants availability along with other supports is welcome.

The ongoing work in relation to dereliction in our towns and villages is starting to make an impact and further National legislation and supports into dereliction would be of help. Properties both commercial and domestic that are left idle should be heavily penalised with higher rates and property tax and the principle of use it or lose it should apply.

The renewed focus on tourism by this Local Authority is greatly welcome. Limerick has a huge tourism offering stretching from the heart of this city to the remotest parts of our County. The ongoing commitment to the great southern greenway is one of the most exciting and adventurous projects this authority can promote. This will take significant funding and is disappointed that the Greenway project was overlooked recent by Government from the rural regeneration and development fund. In fact Limerick received no funding from Government announcement last week. The delivery of an arts and culture programme for our authority continues to be a challenge. Again it's important to get the balance between City and County right and further investment into arts and culture in the County and in particular the County town of Newcastle West is a priority of Councillor Collins.

Councillor Collins confirmed that in July of next year Newcastlewest will host Fleadh an Mumhan, The Munster Fleadh. This will be a showcase of our Irish culture of Music, song and dance, something Councillor Collins has dedicated a huge amount of his life to and thanked this authority for the financial support and look forward to further marketing and promotional support in the months ahead. Councillor Collins referred to the huge positive commercial value to the town and the greater West Limerick area which may be the springboard for Limerick securing Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann, The All Ireland Fleadh in the not too distant future.

The ongoing challenge in our housing directorate is an area that needs further work. It's a huge task to manage our housing stock coupled with the need for increased provision in.

Councillor Collins thanked Director Housing Development and her staff for the dedication and commitment to this area which in my estimation is one of the most challenging areas of this authority. It's very easy for members to be critical of aspects of this directorate but we can't

forget that we are often hamstrung by National Policy and lack of funding. Vacant properties, housing maintenance and the Delivering of the Rebuilding Ireland programme must remain a high focus area for the year ahead.

Councillor Collins referred to the further investment that is needed in our rural towns and villages. Further funding is needed from Central Government to allow the Council purchase more properties that are lying idle in villages in particular which will help two fold, it will deal with dereliction but provide much needed housing for local families crying out for accommodation.

Councillor Collins stated that as an Authority we are highly progressive... As a City & County we are open for business and highly competitive to do that. Since the budget briefing he has been studying this draft document and asking what's in it for the people he represents. In Fianna Fáil, we support the economic development of Limerick through effective marketing and positioning of Limerick as a great place to visit and to do business. Councillor Collins looks forward to the launch of the rebranding of Limerick and the focus of increased economic investment and the creation of further jobs. He would like to see greater focus on attracting and creating jobs in the County and asked for a special focus on this in the months ahead and welcome any new ideas from Management.

Councillor Collins welcomed the renewed commitment to Innovate Limerick and the Local Enterprise Office. LEO is of huge significance to small and medium size businesses and is often the 1st port of call for someone with an idea for a business. Our commitment to Smarter Cities is important and Councillor Collins was fortunate to attend the Smarter Cities Expo this time last year in Barcelona and acknowledged Dr Mihai Bilauca as Head of Digital Strategy. Again European funding is an area that needs greater focus which he discussed with the Deputy Chief Executive during the week and the whole area of grants and funding would warrant a dedicated and full time team sourcing and accessing these funds.

Councillor Collins was delighted that Commercial rates will be untouched this year as rate payers contribute significantly to the commercial fabric of life in Limerick. They provide much needed employment and have had their share of struggles in the past 10 years. We must continue to support them and this is currently being done through the various support schemes such as the business & retail incentive scheme, vacant property scheme and of course the very successful small & medium business support scheme.

Councillor Collins welcomed the ambition of management to deliver on many projects too numerous to outline individually and mentioned the Newcastle West Regional Athletics Hub. he thanked the Councils commitment to date but wanted to highlight the lack of commitment at National level. This is a project that has been going on for over 5 years with a small committed working committee and the Council colleagues in NCW have been hugely supportive. This is a facility that has to be delivered on sooner rather than later by this authority. We have athletes performing at National and International level such as Sophie Meredith from Newcastle West. These athletes have no facilities in the County and are depending solely on an already busy sports arena at Plassey. To grow athletics in the County we need this project delivered on and Councillor Collins requested that the Chief Executive and his management team to identify funding sources with ping our resources.

Councillor Collins referred to the emails received emails in the past few days in relation to mental health and referred to the Prime Time programme which stated that Limerick has one of the highest rates of suicide and self harm. Councillor Collins supported any group who highlight anomalies and issues in our mental health system. Councillor Collins requested that the Mayor to facilitate a cross party delegation led by the Mayor and representatives to meet the Minister for Health along with support from all Oireachtas Members in Limerick City & County. Councillor Collins (M) formally seconded the proposal to adopt the budget as presented.

On behalf of Sinn Fein, Councillor Benson acknowledged that the budget is an improvement on 2019 however, it completely fails to tackle many issues affecting the people of Limerick such as the housing crisis. Councillor Benson confirmed that Sinn Fein will be proposing an alternative that will address the current housing crisis, help those most vulnerable in our society, and protect Small and Medium Enterprises by proposing a series of amendments that will ensure the protection of local businesses, local jobs, local investment, and address the severe lack of local authority housing across the city and county. Councillor Benson confirmed that Sinn Fein propose to end the Tourism Support Scheme, which is designed to ensure that Limerick's largest hotels continue to contribute as little as possible to the local authority. Sinn Féin proposes to phase out the upper bands of Limerick's Vacant Property Scheme, this year reducing the reduction for vacant sites with a rates value of €11,377 to €57,024 from 25% to 15%. Sinn Fein propose to leave the lowest two bands, any vacant site with a rates value of less than €11,376 untouched for 2020. Sinn Féin proposes to expand the bin waver scheme in Limerick, bringing back eligibility for qualification for people on Invalidity Pension and people on Blind Pension and receive an allocation of €70,000.

Sinn Féin proposes action to tackle the number of vacant properties owned by this local authority by allocating the remaining €525,678, towards opening voids. By taking a bottom up approach to opening voids, starting with the lowest costing projects and working upwards, it is estimated that more than 50 houses will be opened up to people on the local authority's housing list, ensuring that 50 families will have a place called home this coming year.

Councillor Benson stated that the Sinn Féin amendments will raise revenue through a 1% rates increase bringing in €585,678, a reduction of the two top bands of the Vacant Property Scheme raising €40,000, and scrapping the rates reductions for big hotels raising €50,000 for the people of Limerick. This will be spent as follows; €70,000 to include people on Invalidity Pension and Blind Pension on the local authority's bin waver scheme, €80,000 to protect our SMEs from any rates increase, and €525,678 to re-open our local authority homes for local families. Councillor Benson thanked the finance team for their assistance during the budget process.

Councillor Benson's proposed amendments were circulated to all Members for consideration.

On behalf of the Green Party, Councillor Leddin (B) referred to the positive budget that was presented to Members and referred to the importance of changing society to ensure that we are all working to tackle the issues affecting our climate. However, Councillor Leddin referred to the travel and settlement patterns provided for in the budget, which have led to the crisis of climate change and emphasised the importance of making changes to transform our society in a way where we don't impact on the mobility or quality of life of our citizens.

On behalf of the Social Democrats, Councillor O'Donovan thanked the finance team for their assistance during the budget process. Councillor O'Donovan referred to the non payroll element of the Corporate Affairs and referred to the various costs within this division. She also referred to the costs associated with the local elections and plebiscite held in May. Councillor O'Donovan referred to the spend on public conveniences and suggested exploring the possibility of revenue from these services through advertising. Councillor O'Donovan also referred to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and emphasised the importance of aligning our budget with these goals.

On behalf of the Labour Party, Councillor Leddin (J) acknowledged the increased budget that was presented to Members and the public services provided within each divisions. Councillor Leddin welcomed the increased spending in housing maintenance and the loan of €15m to upgrade the existing housing stock. As Chairperson of the Travel & Transportation SPC, Councillor Leddin welcomed the increased spending in Roads, however referred to the provision of cycling infrastructure and a review of the terminology used within the Budget template. Councillor Leddin referred to the Limerick 2030 Plan and the progress being made on the key strategic sites. He referred to the importance of the Georgian Quarter and resources to be put in place to promote and further enhance the area.

Councillor Leddin referred to the reduction of Bring Centres and also sought efficiencies in the provision of street cleaning. Councillor Leddin also acknowledged the reduction in the cost of Horse Control for 2020. He also emphasised the importance of public amenities and in particular referred to Caledonian Park on Hyde Road to be redeveloped as a facility to include soccer pitches, running tracks, and playground activities.

On behalf of the non party Members, Councillor Teefy acknowledged the work of the Finance team in the preparation of the budget. She also acknowledged the work completed by the previous council and referred to the Opera site and other key sites being progressed through Limerick 2030. Councillor Teefy referred to the provision of additional outdoor staff working within the Roads team and the significant areas to be covered. She referred to the cost of insurance and the need to reduce this cost. Councillor Teefy emphasised the demand for social housing in the County towns and villages and the need for the construction of social housing in these areas. She also referred the need for additional resources within estate management.

Members asked questions on several aspects of each Division which were responded to by the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and the relevant Director of Service.

All divisions were considered by the Members and the following points were raised;

- Members referred to the Great Southern Greenway and disappointment that no funding was allocated from the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
- Members emphasised the importance of investing in the Authority's housing stock
- Cost of running the Fire Service and also the income that is derived from it such as Call Out Charges to be reviewed.
- Welcomed investment in roads and referred to upgrading of infrastructure and road safety plan for the junctions on the N21
- Members supported funding to be set aside to enhance park, pitches and open spaces
- Requested that funding prioritised for Abbeyfeale and Newcastlewest relief road
- Members requested a breakdown of the Corporate Section overheads.
- Members referred to the HAP Shared Services Centre and if these accounts could be presented independent of the Revenue budget.
- Members emphasised the importance of having projects shovel ready in order to leverage funding
- Members expressed concern with maintenance costs of LA Housing and also emphasised the tenants responsibility for upkeep.
- Members referred to the expenditure in relation to street cleaning and if efficiencies can be achieved here
- Members queried the budget for horse control and reduction in costs for 2020
- Members requested that Cals Park, Hyde Road to be considered for funding
- Members referred to the Local Community Development companies and continued support for these organisations
- Members requested the number of estates to be taken in charge in 2020 and the process to be followed
- Members requested that the opening hours of the Limerick City Museum be increased
- Members requested that cycling infrastructure be enhanced
- Members also discussed the bin waiver scheme and exemptions to the scheme

It was proposed by Councillor Collins (M) and seconded by Councillor Sheahan (J) to adjourn the meeting for ten minutes in order for Members to consider the proposed amendments.

Upon resumption, the Mayor confirmed that 3 amendments had been received. The Meetings Administrator confirmed that a vote would be called on each amendment, which had been received in writing.

Proposed Amendment No.1

The following amendment was submitted in writing proposed by Councillor Benson and seconded by Councillor Costelloe;

Additional income/ Expenditure savings:

Propose an amended Draft Budget 2020 as follows;

Rates 1% increase (additional income)	€585,678
Discontinue Tourism Sector Scheme: D0905	€50,000
Amend Vacant Property Scheme: Band 3 (Reduce from 25% to 15%) & Band 4 (Reduce from 10% to 5%)	€40,000
Total	€675,678
Increase Contribution to Waivers : E0406	€70,000
Increase Maintenance of Local Authority Housing: A0101	€525,678
Increase SME Scheme 1% : D0905:	€80,000
Total	€675,678

The result of the Vote for the proposed amendment No.1 was as follows;

For

Councillors Benson, Costelloe, Hartigan, Leddin (B), Leddin(J), O'Donovan, Secas, Sheehan.

(8)

Against

Councillors Butler, Collins (B), Collins (J), Collins (M), Donegan, Egan, Foley, Galvin, Keary, Kiely, Kilcoyne, McSweeney, Mitchell, Murphy, O'Dea, O'Donoghue, O'Sullivan, Ruddle, Ryan, Scanlan, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (K), Sheahan (M), Slattery, Talukder, Teefy.

(26)

There were no abstentions.

The Meetings Administrator confirmed the proposal **defeated**.

Proposed Amendment No.2

The Meetings Administrator called a vote on the second amendment submitted in writing proposed by Councillor Costelloe and seconded by Councillor Benson;

That the €50,000 contribution to the Ryder Cup 2026 to be transferred to a Mental Health Awareness Programme in conjunction with the HSE.

The result of the Vote was as follows;

For

Councillors Benson, Costelloe, Hartigan, Leddin (B), Leddin(J), O'Donovan, Secas, Sheehan. (8)

Against

Councillors Butler, Collins (B), Collins (J), Collins (M), Donegan, Egan, Foley, Galvin, Keary, Kiely, Kilcoyne, McSweeney, Mitchell, Murphy, O'Dea, O'Donoghue, O'Sullivan, Ruddle, Ryan, Scanlan, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (K), Sheahan (M), Slattery, Talukder, Teefy. (26)

There were no abstentions.

The Meetings Administrator confirmed the proposal **defeated**.

Proposed Amendment No.3

The Meetings Administrator called a vote on the third amendment submitted in writing proposed by Councillor Collins (M) and seconded by Councillor Sheahan (J);

To increase the allocation to Waivers (E0406) to €70,000 to include invalidity pension & blind persons allowance (***subject to the terms and conditions of the Waiver Scheme***) and reduction in bad debt provision in Commercial Rates (H0303)

For

Councillors Benson, Butler, Collins (B), Collins (J), Collins (M), Costelloe, Donegan, Egan, Foley, Galvin, Hartigan, Keary, Kiely, Kilcoyne, Leddin (B), Leddin(J) McSweeney, Mitchell, Murphy, O'Dea, O'Donoghue, O'Donovan, O'Sullivan, Ruddle, Ryan, Scanlan, Secas, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (K), Sheahan (M), Sheehan, Slattery, Talukder, Teefy. (34)

Against

(0)

There were no abstentions.

The Meetings Administrator confirmed the proposal was carried as all 34 Members present were in favour.

Resolution

It was proposed by: Councillor Sheehan (J)

Seconded by: Councillor Collins (M)

THAT the draft Annual Budget for the financial year ending 31st December, 2020 prepared and circulated by the Chief Executive be adopted, be amended as per the schedule attached and be adopted.

AND THAT, as so amended, the Annual Budget be and is hereby adopted as per Tables A, B, D, E & F, in accordance with Section 103 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.

AND THAT, in accordance with the Annual Budget, thus amended, adopted **€0.2677** be and is hereby determined as the General Annual Rate on Valuation to be levied for the several purposes specified in the said Tables, as amended, for the financial year ending on 31st December, 2020, in accordance with Section 103 of the Local Government Act, 2001, by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.

AND THAT, in accordance with Section 135 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, the Report on Capital Projects 2020 – 2022 as presented to the meeting is considered (Item 3 on Meeting Agenda)

AND THAT, the proportion of commercial rates refund that applies on vacant properties in 2020 within the administrative area of Limerick City and County Council, in accordance with the provisions of Section 31 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, and Part 5 of the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations, 2014, and Section 14 of the Local Government Act, 1946, be set at 10% for 2020 (Item 4 on Meeting Agenda)

AND THAT the Vacant Property Refund Scheme 2020 to encourage the beneficial use of commercial property in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, is adopted as circulated without amendment (Item 5 on Meeting Agenda)

AND THAT the Small and Medium Business Support Scheme 2020 in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, is adopted as circulated without amendment. (Item 6 on the Meeting Agenda).

AND THAT the Tourism Sector Support Scheme 2020 in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, (Item 7 on the Meeting Agenda) is adopted as circulated without amendment.

AND THAT Business & Retail Incentive Scheme for Vacant Property from 01/01/2020 until 31/12/2020 in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 subject to finances available, is adopted as circulated without amendment (Item 8 on Meeting Agenda)

The Chief Executive then outlined the under-listed schedule of amendments to the Budget originally proposed:

Schedule of Amendments

	(Decrease)/Increase expenditure
Increase allocation to Waivers (E0406)	70,000
Reduction in Bad Debt Provision - Commercial Rates (H0303)	(70,000)

The Mayor and Members thanked the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and the staff for their assistance in the formation of the Budget.

This concluded the business of the Meeting.

Signed:

Mayor

Date:
