

**Minutes of Budget 2024 Meeting of Clare County Council held in the Council Chamber, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare and via MS Teams on Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 3:00 p.m.**

**Present:**

Councillors M. Howard, C. Colleran Molloy, P. Murphy, P. Daly, J. Cooney, P. Hayes, P. Burke, T. O'Brien, J. Crowe, M. Begley, P.J. Ryan, P. McMahon, G. Flynn, P. O'Gorman, J. Killeen, J. Garrihy, L. Grant, P.J. Kelly, C. Murphy, I. Lynch.

**Attending via MS teams:** Cllrs. J. Flynn, A. Norton, A. O'Callaghan, I. Lynch, S. Talty.

**Apologies:** Cllr. G. Keating, D. McGettigan,

- Mr. Pat Dowling, Chief Executive.
- Ms. Ann Reynolds, Meetings Administrator.
- Ms. Aoife Coote, Assistant Staff Officer.
- Ms. Anne Haugh, Director of Social Development.
- Dr. Carmel Kirby, Director of Economic Development.
- Mr. Leonard Cleary, Director of Tourism Development.
- Ms. Siobhan McNulty, A/Director of Physical Development.
- Ms. Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance and Support Services.
- Ms. Trina Rynne, Financial Accountant.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Joe Cooney presided. At the outset he outlined the purpose of this meeting:

1. Consider the Chief Executive's Draft Budget of Clare County Council for year ending 31st December, 2024.
2. Consider the Capital Programme 2024-2026 in accordance with Section 135 (2) of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.
3. Adopt the eight resolutions for the adoption of the budget, the annual rate on valuation, the vacant property scheme and associated draft budget 2024 grant schemes.

The Cathaoirleach then called on the Chief Executive, Pat Dowling, to introduce Budget 2024. Mr. Dowling addressed the meeting and presented Clare County Council's Draft Budget 2024.

Mr. Dowling addressed the members and stated that this is his 8<sup>th</sup> and the largest Revenue Budget of his tenure with Income and Expenditure of €186.4m. Nationally and internationally challenges and uncertainty continue to impact at local level; inflation driven by volatile global economies, war and the ongoing associated displacement in Ukraine and

the impact of cost-of-living crisis. Notwithstanding the challenges, Mr. Dowling stated that he is confident this budget addresses the needs of the County as we move into 2024.

Mr. Dowling referred to the Members decision in September 2022 to retain the LPT rate for 2023 – 2024, he advised that this was a constructive starting position for Budget 2024 together with the Revenue Local Property Tax allocation of €11.64m, as a result of the national baseline review. This allocation was the outcome of many years petitioning the Department by this Council, and, for the first time, the Council is in receipt of the total value of LPT raised in the County. Mr. Dowling urged the members not to underestimate the contribution this additional allocation will have to services across the county in 2024. Mr. Dowling further stated that this budget, is brought forward in a changing and often volatile environment:

- Inflation, at 5.1%, continues to be a concern and is putting pressure on services from Housing to Public Lighting. The funding, to reduce the impact of Inflation, allocated by Government and budgeted for in 2023, circa €1.9m, is not available in 2024 and this gap had to be addressed as part of any additional monies received in 2024.
- The Revaluation by Tailte Éireann, of all commercial premises in County Clare, a national programme to systematically modernise the ratable valuations will come into effect in 2024. The aim is to improve the transparency of the local authority rating system of all commercial properties, but this did bring challenges to members when considering its ARV (Annual Ratable Valuation) for 2024. The indicative ARV was 0.25 but the Members worked to get this to .239.
- Uisce Éireann has taken direct management control of the Water Services function across the Local Authority sector and the impact on resources and charges also had to be recognised in this budget.

However, Mr. Dowling advised that Clare County Council continues to show foresight by implementing prudent financial decisions to allow for continued investment in key areas. This Budget allowed for a review of all areas of expenditure, to allow for savings without compromising the quality of delivery when balancing this budget.

This budget provides for additionality across a number of areas of greatest need as follows:

- Housing Grants – Housing Aid to Older People, Housing Adaptation Grants and Mobility Aid Grants,
- Community Grants to include playgrounds and burial grounds.
- Recreation and Amenity, to include our beaches and leisure centres.
- Increase in housing maintenance and the homeless services in our County.
- Road maintenance to include hedge cutting etc.
- Increase in support for the library service, including the Book fund.
- General Municipal Allocation increase (GMA).
- While not exhaustive, this list demonstrates the continued commitment to improve services across the county.

Mr. Dowling informed the meeting that Central Government funding for 2024 has been allocated to the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant and the Increased Cost of Business Scheme. The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant is a payment payable for turning a vacant house or building into a permanent home or a rental property. A grant of up to

€50,000 is available. If the property is deemed structurally unsound and dangerous, a derelict property, the total grant available for a derelict property is €70,000.

Mr. Dowling advised that the grant applies to qualifying vacant properties in towns, villages and rural parts of the County. Both will help different sectors in our County but both of equal importance. Mr. Dowling informed the members that this Council has budgeted for both schemes with the aim to maximise our funding and allocate the payments promptly to those who will benefit the most.

Mr. Dowling stated that during 2023 Clare County Council took over the management of Shannon Heritage. He noted how positive this was for the County as the heritage sites under Council management are not only cultural assets but also contribute to our local economy. Mr. Dowling stated that the lessons learned at the Cliffs of Moher and other successful tourism sites under Councils remit will ensure we safeguard these sites and grow and reinvigorate them into the future. Budget provisions in 2024 have allowed for this additional Tourism Income and Expenditure.

Mr. Dowling further stated that the annual budget for Ireland in 2024 includes a total €14bn package which sought to balance the immediate cost of living with investment. Measures are in place to continue to support the Ukrainian response and with 5,226 displaced Ukrainians now living in Clare this support is crucial. However, support received in 2023, in terms of inflation, have been withdrawn so this council relies on its own governance and management of available incomes to balance Revenue in 2024.

Mr. Dowling informed the members that the budget before them also allows for a 3-year Capital Investment Programme, 2024-2026, of €725m which is primarily driven by an impressive Housing Capital Programme, aligned to Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage plan. The overall programme allows for various stages of capital delivery in Tourism Development, Roads Infrastructure, & Libraries.

Mr. Dowling advised that this council strives to maintain its success in applying for Urban and & Rural Regeneration Development Funding and allowing for the associated match funding. Continued capital investment is the cornerstone of the Councils persistent strategic development of the County.

Mr. Dowling reminded members, that for over 25 years leading up to 2016, Clare County Council carried a deficit on its annual account. At the height of this period the Council had an accumulated loss of over €9m. From 2016 to 2022 the Council returned to a balanced situation with a slight surplus and the Council is determined to maintain this situation.

Mr. Dowling summarised that regarding the budget for 2024, there have been considerable deliberations and information made available to members so they can best inform themselves of the Councils financial position. The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) has met on several occasions since September and all members have actively taken part in two member briefings in relation to this budget. Members are fully aware of the positive impact additional income bought for 2024 but are also aware of the ongoing challenges in relation to current expenditure but this balanced budget continues to provide services to the best of the local authority's ability.

Mr. Dowling thanked the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Joe Cooney, for his ongoing collaboration and support and thanked all the members who engaged constructively in the preparation of this

budget at Municipal District and County level. In particular, he thanked the members of the CPG who gave many hours work over recent weeks.

He acknowledged the hard work of the finance team under Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance, ably supported by Trina Rynne, Caroline O'Connor, and others.

Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance and Support Services gave a presentation on Clare County Council's Draft Budget 2024.

Ms. Fitzgerald presented details of the revenue expenditure as well as details of the capital expenditure for 2024 – 2026. She outlined details of:

- Comparative budget figures 2023/2024
- Outcome of the Local Property Tax baseline review
- A summary of areas which will benefit from LPT income.
- Commercial rates revaluation.
- Overview of rates income.
- Community, Business and other supports.

In her presentation to the members, Ms. Fitzgerald highlighted the following:

- Local Property Tax 100% retained locally at €11million.
- €3.7million added to services
- Expenditure increased by €35million.
- Commercial rates 0.239 ARV, which is less than expectation of 0.25.
- Rebalancing rates income across all 4100 properties
- 62% properties where rates decreasing; 38% properties are increasing.
- Less than 2.4% or 96 properties in the County are paying 61% rates.

Ms. Fitzgerald also outlined some of the 2024 planned capital expenditure:

- Flood Relief – €3m
- Housing Construction - €86m
- Inis Cealtra - €6m
- Shannon Bridge Crossing - €20m

Ms Fitzgerald concluded by thanking the Cathaoirleach for his ongoing support, the members of the Corporate Policy Group, Strategic Policy Committees and the elected members for the various discussions/meetings at Municipal District level and at county level. She thanked the Chief Executive and the Directors of Service. She particularly acknowledged the work of her colleagues in Finance, Trina Rynne, Caroline O'Connor and Barry Keating in the preparation of this budget.

### **Social Development Directorate**

Cllr. G. Flynn, Chair of the Social Development S.P.C. addressed the meeting and provided an outline of activities for the Social Development Directorate which administers responsibility for the Housing, Libraries, Arts and Cultural Services delivered by the local

authority. Revenue Budget details for the Housing function are set out in Division A of the budget document while Libraries and Cultural Services details are included at Division F.

As in previous years the drafting of Budget 2024 has been significantly influenced by the challenges of Housing supply which remains a persistent focus of national policy and direction. The strategic importance of this function is reflected in the Section 135 Capital report which projects an unprecedented scale of capital investment in the Social Directorate over the next three years estimated at over €450 m in total.

Mr. Flynn noted that the major element of this expenditure is associated with proposed local authority house construction to deliver on the objectives and targets set out in the Council's Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022 to 2026. With cumulative delivery for the first two years of the plan already set to exceed target and with an ambitious pipeline for delivery in place, there are very positive indications that delivery over the lifetime of the plan to 2026 will comfortably surpass the target of 833 new homes.

Mr. Flynn advised the members that the role of the Approved Housing Body sector continues to be a valuable contributor to the construction pipeline with a requirement to deliver forty percent of the target over the five-year period. The Council works closely with the sector in co-ordinating and supporting the various approved housing bodies in their role and this healthy partnership is yielding positive outcomes in the context of high-quality housing supply in the county.

Mr. Flynn provided details of the successful submission to the Department of Housing where approval in principle was granted to Clare County Council to consider eligible schemes for delivery of affordable housing in Ennis and Shannon.

It is anticipated that delivery of affordable housing will commence in Clare during 2024 and the capital report takes account of this in the attached draft budget.

Mr. Flynn noted that as the housing stock continues to grow with the delivery of modern, energy efficient homes, so too does the cost and complexity of maintenance and the Council's budgets in recent years have attempted to address this funding challenge through successive increases ringfenced from rental income. A similar approach has been adopted for this budget which will yield a €1.2m increase in the Housing Maintenance and Voids provision for 2024. However there still exists a significant funding deficit between the full lifecycle maintenance cost of a property and the available budget and so efforts will have to continue over future budgets to address this shortfall. An additional provision of €100,000 is also necessitated for maintenance of traveller accommodation to respond to an escalation of activity in this area.

Mr. Flynn did advise on a more positive note, in 2024 the Council will likely complete the drawdown of the €10m loan for the implementation of a planned maintenance system. The funding over the past number of years has enabled the completion of a stock condition survey of the entire housing stock, the procurement and implementation of an asset management system and the undertaking of an extensive programme of essential and statutory works to comply with rental standards to some 400 homes to date. This work programme will continue throughout 2024.

Demand for private housing adaptation grants in 2023 once again prompted an application for an additional allocation in Quarter 4 bringing the anticipated total spend to €2.9m for this year. Assuming a similar trend into next year the draft Budget proposes an additional

€600,000 over last year's provision of which €120,000 will be from Council's own resources.

Mr. Flynn noted that regrettably the spend on Homeless Services continues to increase year on year driven by not just the numbers of new presentations but also reflecting the increased costs incurred by service providers in dealing with the more challenging aspects of the service. The availability of suitable emergency accommodation continues to be a challenge due to competing demands and has prompted the need for the local authority to continue to increase the number of beds under its direct control. The provision of €4.1m in 2024 includes the operational costs of a newly acquired facility and as in previous years ninety per cent of the costs associated with Homeless Services are recoupable.

Mr. Flynn informed the meeting that 2024 will be a milestone year for the Library and Cultural Services function with the long-anticipated opening of the new flagship library campus adjacent to Glor in the heart of Ennis. The completion of this building which includes an art gallery and new library HQ also represents one of the largest capital projects ever delivered in the County. It is anticipated that footfall will significantly increase when the new County library opens its doors in Quarter two next year and the draft budget proposes an increase of €175,000 to fund an increased bookstock as well as additional operational costs and licensing associated with an expanded service.

### **Physical Development Directorate**

Cllr. J. Crowe, Chair of Physical Development S.P.C. addressed the meeting and provided a summary of activities for the Physical Development Directorate. Budget 2024 provides for the priorities of the Directorate which for 2023 are:

- The provision of funding for Fire & Emergency in line with WRC (Workplace Relations Commission) recommendation.
- The provision of funding for resourcing and ongoing maintenance of stormwater infrastructure.
- The provision of funding for Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project (PLEEP) and associated unbundling costs.
- The provision of the match funding required for the capital programme.
- Supporting the implementation of the objectives of the Climate Action Plan.

Mr. Crowe advised the members that the budget book before them sets out the 2024 budget for the Physical Directorate and highlighted items as follows:

### **Division B - Roads & Transportation**

Budget 2024 provides for the maintenance and improvement of the road infrastructure across the County in line with funding available through Department Grants and own resources. The detail on the roadwork programme will be set out in the Schedule of Municipal District Works in the first quarter of 2024.

### **Division C - Water Services**

For the purpose of budget 2024 income and expenditure in this area is static. Uisce Éireann (UÉ) is the authority responsible for municipal water services since the effective date, which for Clare was the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

### **Division E - Environment**

The focus of the Environment section for 2024 is compliance with statutory obligations in the relevant legislation areas.

### **Division E - Fire & Emergency**

The key driver in Division E for Budget 2024 is meeting the cost of the WRC agreement in the provision of additional fire personnel. The process of recruitment of additional fire personnel has commenced and the Council is working towards reaching the numbers as set out in the agreement.

Mr. Crowe noted that the staffing of the Climate Action office and a portion of Project Management team is provided for in the revenue budget with the projects delivered by these offices set out in the capital programme in the Section 135 report.

Items for note in these areas are as follows:

#### **Climate Action**

The Climate Action Plan is due for adoption by February 2024 with some 100 objectives for delivery over the lifetime of the plan to meet our energy efficiency and emission reduction targets by 2030.

#### **Project Management Office**

There is significant capital expenditure ongoing and planned for 2024 in the Physical Directorate, these projects amount to some €56.5m capital expenditure for 2024. A significant portion of this expenditure is recouped from the relevant parent department.

Mr. Crowe informed the meeting that projects such as the Ennis Public Realm project, Blakes Corner, the West Clare Greenway, Killaloe Bypass, Shannon and Kilkee CFRAMs, Ennis Public Realm, Doolin project, N19 project are progressing and will incur expenditure during 2024.

#### **Economic Development Directorate**

Cllr. P. McMahon, Chair of the Economic Development S.P.C. addressed the meeting and outlined key objectives for the Economic Development Directorate for 2024 noting that increasing business costs from rising inflation and the war in Ukraine highlights the vital

role of economic development and enterprise supports. The Local Enterprise Office will continue to support businesses across the County with a range of grant funding, training and mentoring supports.

Mr. McMahon informed the members that the Ennis 2040 Strategy continues to act as a guide to development within Ennis and its Environs to achieve real economic improvements, as well as public realm and sustainable transport improvements, positioning Ennis as a leading regional town in Ireland. In 2024, a new Transport Plan for Ennis will be completed following public consultation, and the preparation of a new Ennis Local Area Plan will commence.

Mr. McMahon noted that following on from the completion of the Shannon Town Masterplan the Economic Directorate is advancing the delivery of 'The One Shannon Hub'. This is a multipurpose space combining new civic offices, a performance and community space, library, and flexible co-working spaces in the heart of Shannon Town. The new development will also feature public realm improvements to the town square adjacent to the site. The concept design is due to be completed in Quarter 1 2024 in time for the next URDF call. The new Shannon Town and Environs Local Area Plan has commenced and will be completed in 2024.

Mr. McMahon stated that the development of a Maritime Training facility in Kilrush Town is a key Economic Directorate project for 2024. This is an action in the Government's Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce Report and builds on the Shannon Estuary Strategic Integrated Framework Plan. An application for funding under the recently announced Enterprise Ireland Smart Innovation Scheme is being prepared for the facility complementing the RRDF funding already secured for the project.

Mr. McMahon further stated that there are many other important projects being advanced by the directorate including the implementation of the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan and the Corofin Enhancement Strategy.

Mr. McMahon noted that the Derelict Sites Team and the Vacant Homes team will continue implementing the Vacant Homes Action Plan and the CPO Activation Programme, which has continued to deliver significant results in recent years. As part of the work of the Forward Planning Section, the Clare County Heritage Plan 2024 – 2030 will be completed in 2024 and the Clare County Biodiversity Plan 2024 – 2030 will be prepared.

## **Rural Development Directorate**

Cllr. P. Hayes, Chair of the Rural Development S.P.C. provided an overview of the main activities in this area and noted that the Rural Directorate was extended in 2023 to include the Sport & Recreation and Ukrainian & Migration functions. The Rural Work programme is broad and varied with a continued focus on the delivery of the renewed Rural Development Strategy 2030 for the County.

Mr. Hayes noted that the Communities are directly supported in their capacity building, in a 'bottom-up approach' through four Rural & Community Development Officers who are focussed on each of the Municipal Districts. From a strategic perspective, a new Local Economic and Community Plan for County Clare is expected to be delivered during 2024. The Plan sets out a 6-year vision for the County seeking to target funding and investment into the County to where it is needed.



Mr. Hayes advised that the Healthy Ireland program will continue to target funding for wellbeing initiatives into 2024 while Community Playgrounds, which are owned, managed and operated by playground committees will continue to be supported with an increase in budget being included for this core amenity.

Mr. Hayes further advised that the Age Friendly Programme in Clare remains a priority for Clare County Council, with the development of a new Age Friendly Strategy, 2023-2027, in progress. It will set out “a collective ambition” for Age Friendly in Clare. The Community Response Forum continues to support both our Ukrainian guests and the communities who have acted tirelessly to support them. The SPC group has worked closely with the Grants Team and are confident that all of the 130 supported projects to receive funding across the county under the €2.9m Community Recognition Fund in 2023 will be delivered during 2024.

A new Local Authority Integration Team (LAIT) to co-ordinate the provision of supports for all members of the migrant community is being established in Clare County Council. With that in mind a Clare Integration Strategy and County Action Plan against Racism will be developed into 2024.

Mr. Hayes advised that at a recent workshop of the Rural SPC it was re-confirmed that Burial Grounds are an essential service and budget 2024 allows for an additional €50,000 in maintenance support to strengthen provision. To further assure and support the burial ground function it will be included in a review of resources and structures early in 2024.

Mr. Hayes noted that the Clare Local Community Grants Scheme (CLAGS) funding has been re-instated by €200,000 to the 2022 levels with an additional €60,000 being included in the in 2024 budget. Some 397 groups across the county benefitted from the funding in 2023 which provides critical support for economic, social, environmental and cultural initiatives across our communities.

Clare County Council works closely with the Public Participation Network (PPN) and is committed to providing the same level of support in 2024.

Mr. Hayes informed the members that a new addition to the Rural Directorate this year was Sport and Recreation. Additional funding intervention of €85,000 is being made in the 2024 budget to support the operations of the leisure centres in Shannon, Lahinch and Kilkee: These supports will help mitigate the impacts of increases in commercial rates following the revaluation of these facilities as well as inflationary costs.

In addition to these supports investment has been identified for the refurbishment of the track surface, surrounds, discus cage, shot-putt area and access control measures in the Lees Road facility.

Mr. Hayes proceeded to introduce Tourism as a new aspect to the Budget for the Rural Development SPC area. This follows from the creation of a Tourism Development Directorate. This reflects the expanding tourism product portfolio and the tourism development function. Mr. Hayes acknowledged and thanked the Chief Executive for this innovation.

The tourism product portfolio of Vandeleur Walled Garden, Loop Head Lighthouse and Cliffs of Moher has been expanded to include Inis Cealtra, Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, Craggaunowen and Knappogue Castle and Gardens, Mr. Hayes advised.

The title of the Directorate, “Tourism Development” sends a clear signal that this budget is more than the operation of tourism sites. It is primarily about the development of the tourism economy in Clare.

Mr. Hayes noted that this budget supports the following tourism development objectives:

- Deliver projects under Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 working with agencies, industry, Clare Tourism Forum.
- Lead tourism development in Clare.
- Governance of tourism company.
- Deliver projects under Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040.
- Integrate Shannon Heritage into Council portfolio.
- Manage and develop 7 Council owned tourism sites.
- Develop digital hubs, broadband & Digital Strategy.

Mr. Hayes stated that during 2023, the Clare Digital Strategy went from strength to strength with the continued success of 11 Digital Hubs which are spread across the four Municipal Districts for 2023, a number of which have been developed in partnership with Community Groups and Development Associations. In looking ahead, Budget 2024 plans for significant investment in the implementation of the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 supported by Clare Tourism Advisory Forum. Linked to this is the preparation of a draft Cliffs of Moher Strategy 2040. This is currently undergoing the SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) and has been recommended by the Rural Development SPC for consideration at the appropriate time.

Mr. Hayes further stated that the transfer of Shannon Heritage to Clare County Council was completed in May 2023 and already the team at the various sites have achieved positive success with a very strong tourism season and recovery from the post pandemic challenges in tourism.

Mr Hayes acknowledged that the overall aim of the Clare Tourism Strategy 2030, and the plans for the various sites, is to maximise the potential of tourism for the County with a strong emphasis on sustainable tourism.

Mr. Hayes then referred to the capital projects currently in progress:

- Inis Cealtra, /Holy Island
- Loop head Lighthouse.
- Vandeleur Walled Garden - Clare County Council will be match-funding 25% of this investment.
- Cliffs of Moher - large scale improvements to visitor facilities. This will be self-funded.

- Shannon Heritage sites - There will be a refresh of these sites in 2024.

The elected members thanked Pat Dowling, Chief Executive, Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance and Support Services, her team and all the Council executive for their work and support in preparing Budget 2024. The members acknowledged the engagement by the Council executive in sourcing solutions and addressing these issues in the budget for 2024 while it is also important to produce a budget that balanced. The members agreed that this was one of the most progressive budgets they had seen in over 25 years and were appreciative of the work done by the executive to bring clarity to the budget document for the members.

The members all welcomed the increase in funding for burial grounds and the increase in the General Municipal Allocation (GMA).

Questions were raised by the members in relation to grants and the deficit prior to 2016. Noeleen Fitzgerald, Director of Finance answered all the queries raised by the members.

## Resolutions

Ar moladh Cllr. P.J. Ryan  
Cuidithe ag Cllr.P. Daly agus glacadh leis

- I. That pursuant to Section 3 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019 the Draft Budget 2024 as presented by the Chief Executive is hereby adopted.

The Meetings Administrator read out the remaining seven resolutions which were adopted by the members:

Ar moladh Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy  
Cuidithe ag Cllr. M. Howard agus glacadh leis

- II. That the Council hereby determine in accordance with the draft budget 2024 as presented by the Chief Executive, the General Annual Rate on Valuation for the County of 0.239 set out in Table A.

Ar moladh Cllr. P. Hayes  
Cuidithe ag Cllr. P. O’Gorman agus glacadh leis

- III. That in accordance with Section 9 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019, as amended, Clare County Council makes a scheme for the abatement of rates due to it by the liable person, or classes of liable persons, in respect of **vacant** properties .Such a scheme in respect of vacant property will

provide for an abatement of 25% of rates due to Clare County Council by a liable person for the financial year ending 31 December 2024.

Ar moladh Cllr. P. Burke

Cuidithe ag Cllr. P. McMahon agus glacadh leis

- IV. That to encourage the beneficial use of commercial property, approve in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, a tiered vacancy property refund/ credit scheme as outlined in the Chief Executive Report and below.

<b>Band</b>	<b>%</b>
Up to €20,000 Annual Rate Demand	75%
€20,001 to €50,000 Annual Rate Demand	50%
€50,001 to €100,000 Annual Rate Demand	25%
Over €100,001 Annual Rate Demand	0%

Ar moladh Cllr. J. Crowe

Cuidithe ag Cllr. A. Norton agus glacadh leis

- V. To consider the adoption of the Small and Medium Business 5% Support Scheme 2024 in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.

The SME 5% Support Scheme for 2024 is in respect of occupied properties, with a total rate value up to €10,000, will provide for a 5% against the subsequent year commercial rates liability where the customer discharges their rates invoice by direct debit in the year or discharged in full by 31st August 2024. Exceptions to the scheme:

- Pipeline, Mast/Antenna, Generating Station, Advertising Station, Global Valuations and ATM

Ar moladh Cllr. J. Killeen

Cuidithe ag Cllr. A. Norton agus glacadh leis

- VI. To consider the adoption of the Hospitality 5% Support Scheme 2024 in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.

The Hospitality 5% Support Scheme 2024 is in respect of occupied Hospitality Sector properties, with a total rates value above €10,000, will provide for a 5% credit, capped at €5,000, against the subsequent year commercial rates liability

where the customer discharges their rates invoice by direct debit in the year or discharged in full by 31st August 2024.

Ar moladh Cllr. P. Daly  
Cuidithe ag Cllr. M. Begley agus glacadh leis

- VII. To consider the adoption of the Long-Term Vacant Property Incentive Scheme 2024 from 01/01/2024 until 31/12/2024 in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.

By encouraging the re-occupation of vacant premises that were previously occupied and now vacant, the grant scheme is a grant of the following where the commercial rates are paid in full in the financial year. The scheme for 2024 will be reviewed and realigned to the commercial rate calendar year.

- 75% of commercial rates payable in year one up to a maximum of €3,750
- 50% of commercial rates payable in year two up to a maximum of €2,500
- 25% of commercial rates payable in year three up to a maximum of €1,250

Ar moladh Cllr. C. Murphy  
Cuidithe ag Cllr. M. Howard agus glacadh leis

- VIII. That pursuant to Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the local Government Reform Act, 2014, that total assistance, in the form of both cash and non-cash payments , to the bodies outlined below is hereby approved.

Lahinch Seaworld	€161,000
Shannon Leisure Centre	€164,500
Kilkee Waterworld	€140,000
Glór	€270,000

The Cathaoirleach thanked the members, Chief Executive, Directors of Service and Director of Finance and Support Services and their staff for their co-operation in the preparation and adoption of the Budget for 2024. He also thanked members of the Corporate Policy Group and all members for their input into the Budget process.

The meeting then concluded at 16:31p.m.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Riarthóir Cruinnithe**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Cathaoirleach**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_