

Minutes of Budget Meeting of Leitrim County Council held in the Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, Carrick on Shannon, Monday, 23rd November, 2015

Members Present: Councillor Armstrong–McGuire, Finola
Councillor Barry, Brendan
Councillor Dolan, Frank
Councillor Gerry Dolan
Councillor Fallon, Pdraig
Councillor Ellis, Caillian
Councillor Guckian, Des
Councillor Guckian, Sinead
Councillor Gurn, Felim
Councillor Kenny, Martin
Councillor Logan, Seadhna
Councillor McDermott, Sean
Councillor McGowan, Sean
Councillor Paddy O'Rourke
Councillor Stenson, Enda
Councillor Warnock, Justin

And Councillor Mary Bohan, Leas Cathaoirleach presiding

Apologies: Councillor McCartin, John

Officials Present: Mr Frank Curran, Chief Executive
Ms Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing and Community, Corporate Services, Culture and Emergency Services
Mr. Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation
Mr. John McKeon, A/Head of Finance
Mr Shay O'Connor, Senior Engineer, Infrastructure
Mr Billy Lowe, Senior Engineer, Water
Mr Shane Tiernan, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Sinead Flynn, Meetings Administrator
Ms Kathleen McGovern Ellis, Assistant Staff Officer

Councillor Mary Bohan, Leas Cathaoirleach outlined at the outset of the meeting that the Cathaoirleach, Councillor John McCartin had conveyed his apologies that he was unable to attend the meeting. Councillor Bohan advised that she had been asked to Chair the meeting, as Leas Cathaoirleach, in the absence of the Cathaoirleach.

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23/11/2015 **Votes of Sympathy**

The Members extended a vote of sympathy to the following:

- John Heaney, Ardagh, Foxfield, Ballinamore on the death of Margaret Heaney.
- Kathyne Bohan, Edergole, Gortvagh, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim on the death of Kathleen McLaughlin.
- Betty McManus, High Street, Drumshanbo, Co Leitrim on the death of Paddy McManus.

The Leas Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan invited the Chief Executive to give an overview of the Draft Budget for 2016 as presented to the Members.

Mr. Frank Curran, Chief Executive referred to the Draft Budget for the Financial Year ending 31st December, 2016 and to his report dated 13th November, 2015 as circulated to each Member. A copy of the Budget document as circulated to the Members appears as **Appendix 1** to the Minutes of this Meeting in the Minute Book.

Mr. Curran outlined that the Draft Budget for 2016 provides for Revenue Expenditure of €32,111,186, including the Local Property Tax allocation of €8,282,319. He also outlined that an additional €88,341 (once off allocation of funding) was notified to Leitrim County Council on Friday last to compensate for a decrease in Utilities Valuations 2016 giving a revised Local Government Fund of €8,370,660. Mr. Curran informed the Members that it was proposed to allocate the additional funds in the following manner: €40,000 to Local Roads, €20,000 to Housing Maintenance and the remaining €28,000 to Tourism Initiatives.

Mr. Curran outlined that the three Municipal Districts had adopted the General Municipal Allocations for inclusion in the 2016 Draft Budget and this total allocation has been taken into account within the relevant service divisions. He advised that the Roads Budget will also be brought to the Municipal Districts in February, 2016. Mr. Curran acknowledged the continuing difficult trading conditions being experienced by the business community in Leitrim and he referred to the important contribution they make to the funding of services provided by Leitrim County Council. He stated that there has been no increase in the Annual Rate on Valuation since 2008 and he outlined that this will be the 8th year in which no increase in the annual rate of valuation has been implemented.

Mr. Curran outlined that Leitrim County Council are obliged to provide budgetary provision for the following items in 2016:

- An Annual contribution of €100,000 towards the Council's cumulative deficit.
- An Increased Bad Debt Provision for legacy Commercial Rates Debtors of €330,000.
- A decrease in Commercial Rates revenue due to a reduction in the Global Valuations of Utility Providers of €77,000.

He advised that the financial resources available to Leitrim County Council to fund service provision are limited, however, he referred to a number of existing and positive actions included in the budget for 2016 including:

- A new Local Area Plan for Carrick-on-Shannon/Cortober, in collaboration with Roscommon County Council
- Under Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ), a land use strategy for Manorhamilton will be developed.
- A New County Tourism Website will be launched and promoted in 2016.
- Funding has been provided, in conjunction with the national funding programme, to co-fund events and activities as part of the County's 1916 Centenary Action Plan.
- The continuing expansion of the USEFE jointly funded programme between Bord Na Mona, ESB and the counties of Leitrim, Cavan, Roscommon and Longford.
- The taking of a state in Ireland West Knock Airport to identify and exploit tourism opportunities for the region.

- The further promotion of the Purple Flag standard for Carrick-on-Shannon in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce.
- Further development of the Blueway between Drumshanbo and Carrick-on-Shannon in conjunction with Waterways Ireland.

Mr. Curran then invited Mr John McKeon, A/Head of Finance to introduce Budget 2016.

Mr McKeon gave a detailed overview of the budgetary process and the structure of the Budget document. A copy of the presentation as delivered, and as circulated to the Members, appears as **Appendix 2** to the Minutes of this Meeting in the Minute Book.

Mr John McKeon outlined that the difference of €2.4 million in Reconciliation Budget 2015 of €34.5 million v Budget 2016 of €32.1 million is accounted for by the following:-

- NPA Pavement & Minor Works Grant of €1.65m
- Deceased Loan Charges of €343,000 as a result of these loans being transferred to Irish Water.
- Decreased Gratuities of €332,000.
- Decreased Payroll costs of €92,000.

Leas Cathaoirelach, Councillor Mary Bohan thanked Mr McKeon for his presentation.

Councillor Des Guckian proposed a 5% cut in commercial rates to assist the business community be adopted by the Members and he outlined that he did not accept that the annual rate of valuation should remain at the 2015 level.

Leas Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan outlined that the Budget had been prepared on the basis that there is no change in the annual rate of valuation. She outlined that if Councillor Des Guckian was proposing a 5% cut in commercial rates which equates to a €250,000 reduction in revenue funding for Leitrim County Council then Councillor Guckian would have to identify where the savings would be achieved.

Councillor Des Guckian responded by stating that the additional funding of €88,341 received together with reductions across other service areas could provide for a 5% reduction in commercial rates.

Councillor Mary Bohan again informed Councillor Des Guckian that he would need to specifically outline the areas where savings could be achieved to introduce a 5% cut in commercial rates.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke expressed his concern in relation to the housing maintenance budget to fund the casual vacancy programme for vacant dwellings. He noted that there are approximately 80 vacant local authority dwellings awaiting the completion of vacant repair works and he also referred to the significant number of households on the Housing Waiting List awaiting the allocation of local authority accommodation.

Councillor Martin Kenny pointed out that the issue of the loss of income of €77,000 due to a reduction in the Global Valuations of Utility Providers is a national issue and he proposed that the Council call on the Government to ensure that this once off payment of €88, 341 be provided on an annual basis rather than on a once off basis for the current year.

Councillor Sean Mc Dermott supported Councillor Kenny's proposal.

Mr. Frank Curran agreed that a letter to this effect will be forwarded to the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government.

Councillor Felim Gurn paid tribute to Mr McKeon, A/Head of Finance and staff on preparing a Budget in the context of very limited funding. Councillor Gurn noted that Leitrim Tourism did not have Trade Stands at either the Fleadh Cheoil in Sligo or at the National Ploughing Championships in Tullamore 2015 and he noted that each event attracts over ½ million people and that Leitrim County Council should have a presence at such events in the future to showcase Leitrim as a tourism destination.

Councillor Sinead Guckian noted that all over the country local authorities are in the process of balancing difficult budgets having regard to limited financial resources available to the local authorities. She outlined that Leitrim County Council's Budget has fallen from €49 million in 2008 to €32 million in 2016. Councillor Sinead Guckian expressed her dis-satisfaction with the late announcement on Friday last of the additional once off funding allocation of €88,341 after the Draft Budget had been prepared and circulated to the Members.

Councillor Finola Armstrong sought clarification in relation to the rates write off of €330,000. Mr John McKeon, A/Head of Finance advised that this figure is to provide for properties that are vacant and seasonal in nature, he noted that 19% of commercial properties in the county are currently vacant.

Councillor Brendan Barry expressed his concern in relation to the commercial rates for local businesses. Councillor Barry noted that as Leitrim County Council has a stake in Knock West Airport it should seek to have flights from Knock West Airport to London Heathrow which may potentially assist with investment in the County and job creation.

This overview of the Budget was noted by the Members and it was agreed that Mr McKeon would proceed to give an overview of each individual Division and that questions arising would then be addressed after each Division.

Division A - Housing and Building

Mr John McKeon gave an overview of the provisions in Division A – Housing & Building. He outlined that an additional €20,000 would be included in the Housing & Maintenance Programme arising from the additional funding allocation notified to Leitrim County Council on Friday 20th November, 2015.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke expressed concern that there is not sufficient funding available to carry out pre-letting repairs to the 80 vacant local authority dwellings. He noted that the return of vacant dwellings to productive use has a positive impact in increasing the rental income to the local authority and addressing housing need for households on the Housing Waiting List.

Councillor Martin Kenny also referred to the number of vacant local authority housing stock in various locations in the county. He outlined that many of these dwellings only require minor works to have them available for re-letting, however, he stated that the lack of staff resources is delaying the progression of these works. Councillor Kenny recommended that these works be contracted out in order to have the dwellings available for occupancy in a shorter time-frame.

Councillor Caillian Ellis requested clarification in relation to the provision of single rural dwellings for households on the Housing Waiting List that had a site available to them for the provision of a rural dwelling.

Councillor Sean McDermott also requested an update in relation to the provision of single rural dwellings for approved housing applicants seeking the provision of a single rural dwelling on family owned land in rural areas. Councillor McDermott also welcomed the introduction of the new Tenant Purchase Scheme to enable existing local authority tenants to purchase their dwellings.

Councillor Sinead Guckian queried if the proposed new Tenant Purchase Scheme would have any implications in Budget 2016.

Councillor Justin Warnock noted that there are significant levels of vacant housing stock, however, he queried how many of the dwellings would be accepted by housing applicants on the Housing Waiting List given that a number of the dwellings are located in rural areas with poor access to essential services.

Councillor Felim Gurn proposed that an inspection programme for dwellings where a tenancy is being terminated has been indicated by put in place in order to ensure that the dwellings are returned to the local authority in a reasonable condition. He also welcomed that 7 additional social housing units will be provided to meet housing need in Manorhamilton and he requested that one of these dwellings be made available to specifically address the housing need for a person with a disability. Councillor Gurn proposed that housing should be made available in each Municipal District to cater for people with Intellectual Disabilities.

Councillor Des Guckian pointed out that there is a massive need for Government intervention and he raised concern in relation to allocating accommodation to people where the accommodation is in a rural setting is this is not their preference.

Leas Cathaoirleach, Councillor Mary Bohan stated that in her experience as an Elected Member she considered that the allocation of local authority accommodation has been delivered in a fair and transparent manner and in accordance with the Allocation Scheme.

Councillor Sean McGowan raised his concern in relation to delays in completing housing repairs for existing local authority tenants. Councillor Pdraig Fallon also raised a similar concern in relation to the time-frame for the completion of pre-letting repairs to vacant local authority dwellings. He stated that a lack of staff and financial resources was having a significant impact on the casual vacancy programme.

In response to the queries raised Ms. Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing and Community, Corporate Services, Culture and Emergency Services acknowledged that there are challenges in relation to the Housing Programme in terms of returning vacant dwellings to a habitable condition and attending to housing maintenance requests from existing tenants.

Ms Quinn provided an overview of the current housing need and outlined that there are currently 446 approved housing applicants on the Housing Waiting List, 50% of the applicants are in receipt of rent supplement from the Department of Social Protection. She outlined that in 2015 a total of 112 have been offered accommodation, 56 to date have accepted accommodation and there is a 45% refusal rate. Ms. Quinn noted that a total of 44 new tenants were appointed since 1st January, 2015. She also outlined that substantial works have been completed under the Energy Retrofitting Programme in 2015 with €317,000 in funding provided to upgrade a total of having 254 dwellings and an additional 40 dwellings had upgrades completed under the Sustainable Energy Programme. In addition Ms. Quinn outlined that 41 dwellings were surrendered to the local authority to date in 2015 and that the current targeted Pre-letting Repairs Programme has 57 units included in this programme and that 34 units will have works completed under the Voids Programme which is funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local

Government. Ms. Quinn noted that 9 of the dwellings included in the Voids Programme will have the works completed by year-end and that the remaining units will have the works programmed in Quarter 1, 2016. She stated that there is a provision in the 2016 Budget for houses that become derelict and she also noted that the condition of the dwellings and the age and year of the construction of the dwellings impact of the scale of the works required to return the dwellings to be available for occupancy and that a significant number of the vacancies are in locations where there is little demand for social housing.

Ms Quinn advised that Housing Policy, Social and Cultural Development Strategic Policy Committee will consider the possible introduction of a Choice Based Letting Scheme to assist in the allocation of accommodation in low demand areas and that any change to the Allocation Scheme to introduce Choice Based Lettings is a reserved function that will have to be approved by the Elected Members at a Council Meeting.

Ms Quinn advised that the provision of single rural dwellings for approved housing applicants has been redundant in recent years due to the lack of funding from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government other than where the applicant(s) has a specific housing need to be addressed e.g. on disability grounds.

Ms. Quinn indicated that it is difficult to predict what the level of interest in the new Tenant Purchase Scheme will be before any implications will be known, however, she also noted that the sale of dwellings will generate additional income for the local authority.

Ms Quinn confirmed that consideration will be given in relation to allocating one of the dwellings in Manorhamilton currently under construction to an approved housing applicant with a disability.

Councillor Frank Dolan queried if the refusal rate in Leitrim is higher than in other local authority areas and queried what the main factors are that are influencing housing applicants to refuse offers of social housing support.

Councillor Des Guckian queried if the Housing Maintenance Staff were adequately qualified to address issues with dampness and chimneys in local authority dwellings.

Councillor Justin Warnock proposed that dwellings within the local authority social housing stock that are located in low demand areas could be disposed of/sold off at reduced rates to persons that are not eligible for social housing support but may not be in a position to fund a large mortgage.

Ms Quinn advised that a more detailed analysis on the allocation of dwellings and the acceptance/refusal rate will be prepared for the Members.

Ms Quinn advised that the Housing Technical staff are professionally qualified and competent to in relation to their duties to attend to housing maintenance issues relating to chimneys and dampness. She also noted that in many cases the issues reported/complained of by the tenant are as a result of how tenants manage and maintain their dwellings by providing adequate heating, and ventilation etc.

Ms Quinn advised that periodic inspections are carried out on a regular basis and dwellings where tenants have indicated their intention to surrender their tenancy are inspected prior to the keys and vacant possession of the property being returned to the local authority. She also stated that a number of properties are abandoned by the former tenants and that these properties are generally returned in very poor condition and require significant works before they can be made available for occupancy.

Councillor Martin Kenny queried if there is any extra funding for housing in 2016. Ms Quinn confirmed that the level of funding for the Housing Programme in 2016 remains at the 2015 level.

Councilor Sinead Guckian expressed her concern if a national policy was introduced in relation to the proposed sale of local authority dwellings in areas of low social housing demand and she stated that this proposal could have serious implications on this local authority. She queried if there the current legislation provides for the sale of a local authority dwelling on the private market if there no demand for the dwelling for social housing support.

Ms Quinn advised that this issue will be discussed by the Housing Policy, Social and Cultural Development Strategic Policy Committee.

Mr. Frank Curran advised that the refusal rate in relation to the allocation of local authority accommodation is a national issue and that the Department is reviewing the matter. He stated that where housing applicants are residing in good quality private rented accommodation and in receipt of rent supplement their preference is to remain in this accommodation and this is impacting on the refusal of offers of local authority accommodation.

Division B - Road Transport & Safety

Mr. John McKeon, A/Head of Finance gave an overview of the provisions in Division B – Road Transport and Safety. He outlined that the final budget in relation to Roads will not be known until the allocations are made in early 2016.

Councillor Pdraig Fallon noted that there was no provision made for Local/Regional Bridges or improvements in Public Lighting.

Councillor Caillian Ellis expressed his disappointment that no funding is available to fund the Local Improvement Schemes. Councillor Ellis proposed that a letter issue to the Department to seek funding for the Local Improvement Scheme.

Councillor Sean McGowan supported Councillor Ellis's proposal and stated that funding for the Local Improvement Scheme has not been available for a number of years and that the matter should be raised with the Department.

Councillor Justin Warnock also supported the request for funding to be provided under the Local Improvement Schemes and he also referred to the condition of Lennox Bridge which he stated is in urgent need of repair.

Councillor Des Guckian expressed his concern and disappointment that the roads allocation has dropped from €14m to €7million over the last number of years and that the roads allocation is not available until February 2016 when it should be available for this meeting. Councillor Des Guckian referred to the poor condition of a number of lanes and bye-roads and he stated that this reflected poorly on Leitrim County Council and the Government. He queried what benefit it was to householder to pay the Local Property Tax with €650 million of taxpayer's money being utilised to fund the costs of establishing Irish Water.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke supported Councillor Des Guckian's comments in relation to the significant reductions in the Roads Allocation with a 22% decrease in the allocation since 2010.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke stated that Members are in a very difficult position having to consider a Roads Budget when details of the Roads Allocation are awaited and won't be available until

February, 2016. He noted that in the event of a severe weather incident additional funding may be required.

Councillor Seadhna Logan expressed his disappointment that there is no funding for the routine maintenance of footpaths provided for in the budget.

Councillor Martin Kenny said that he understood that it was proposed that in future a 3 year Plan for Roads would be put in place instead of an annual allocation of funding. He also stated that as a result of the NRA taking over the control of Regional Roads Leitrim County Council would lose control and this may be a disadvantage for the County.

Councillor Brendan Barry supported the comments of the other Members in relation to the difficulty in agreeing the Roads Budget in the absence of formal notification from the Department in relation to the funding that will be provided in 2016 for the Roads Programme.

Councillor Sean McDermott expressed his concern in relation to a lane in Kiltyclogher which he stated was in a very poor state of repair which serves a number of families living locally. He also referred to the significant cuts in funding imposed on the local authority for the Roads Programme. Councillor Sean MC Dermott referred to absence of the hard shoulder on the N16 and raised health and safety concerns particularly in relation to the number of cyclists and pedestrians that regularly use this route.

Councillor Mary Bohan outlined that in previous years the Members of this Council have asked for the Roads Allocation to be made available for the Budget Meeting but this request has not been acted upon by the Department.

Councillor Enda Stenson concurred with Councillor Mary Bohan.

Councillor Felim Gurn pointed that all landowners should ensure that their hedges are cut in the hedge cutting season.

In response to the queries raised Mr. Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation advised that there is no provision to fund additional public lighting. He advised that a provision has been made to maintain the existing public lighting and that the only additional public lighting that can be taken on is in housing estates that are taken in charge. Mr. Gilhooly outlined that it is proposed to put a programme in place over the next number of years for the maintenance of footpaths and he stated that the issue in relation to the lack of a hard shoulder on the N16 will be discussed at the next SPC Meeting. He concluded by stating that the local authority carry out hedge cutting on Regional Roads and that landowners also have responsibility for hedge-cutting on their lands.

Mr. Shay O'Connor advised that the R280 Lennox Bridge matter has been discussed with Donegal County Council.

Councillor Justin Warnock acknowledged the reply, however, he stressed that the bridge requires immediate attention given the volume of traffic which uses this route on a daily basis.

Councillor Frank Dolan paid tribute to the success of the hedge cutting system completed by Leitrim County Council earlier this year and he noted that greater action should be taking against non-compliant landowners that fail to cut hedges on their landholdings. He also paid tribute to the Council for the works completed on road maintenance and stated that the majority of the roads in Leitrim are in good condition notwithstanding the limited resources to fund the necessary works.

Councillor Seadhna Logan sought clarification on the car parking provision of €95,269.

Mr. Gilhooly advised that the provision for car parking in 2016 is the same as in 2015, however, the projected outturn is lower in 2015 for a number of reasons – no intention of increasing rates, new community warden employed.

Mr. Gilhooly acknowledged that the concerns of the Members however he advised that the financial resources are limited and that the Roads Programme cannot address all of the roads/lanes that require maintenance/improvement works.

Mr. Curran advised that the Roads Programme will be dependent on the funding allocation made available to Leitrim County Council.

Councillor Mary Bohan proposed that a letter issue urgently to the Department requesting extra funding to be made available for footpaths, public lighting, Local Improvement Scheme and emphasizing that our local and county roads network in the County are deteriorating rapidly.

Councillor Enda Stenson supported this proposal.

Councillor Des Guckian proposed that the Council should seek at a minimum a 25% increase in the Roads Allocation.

Councillor Mary Bohan agreed that any figure can be put on it but this funding is needed urgently and there is currently inadequate funding available to County Leitrim.

It was agreed that a letter in this regard would issue to the Department.

Division C - Water Services

Mr. John McKeon, A/Head of Finance gave an overview of the provisions in Division C – Water Services.

Councillor Frank Dolan queried as to why there was a significant increase in the provision for Water Group Schemes for 2016 compared with 2015.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke referred to an issue in relation to a dwelling in Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim involving the householder and agents from Irish Water. He stated that errors were made in the changing of the water meter by the agents employed by Irish Water which then resulted in a localised flooding issue which the local authority had to remedy. Councillor O'Rourke stated that this situation was unacceptable and had cost implications for the local authority arising from the actions of Irish Water staff.

Councillor Des Guckian queried as to how many staff transferred from Leitrim County Council to Irish Water and if they are now permanently employed with Irish Water.

Councillor Martin Kenny noted that when a Contractor requests permission to open a section of roadway for laying of pipes that the consent of the local authority is required and that conditions are attached to the permission. Councillor Kenny queried if the Council had received a road opening fee from Irish Water and he also noted that all Contractors must have insurance and he queried if the associated costs could be claim from Irish Water.

Councillor Sean McDermott paid tribute to the NLRWSS and queried why boil water notices remain in place as this situation has been ongoing for some time.

Councillor Sean McGowan requested confirmation of the number of Group Water Schemes that are in discussions with the Local Authority to have them taken over by the local authority and he queried the possibility of funding being available for these works.

Councillor Sinead Guckian sought an update on the Group Water Scheme bulk metres.

Councillor Pdraig Fallon sought clarification if there was an increase in the number of applications received for individual well installations, would the funding increase accordingly.

Councillor Brendan Barry sought clarification on the provision of the Local Authority Water Services.

In response to the queries raised Mr Joseph Gilhooly advised that Group Water Scheme subsidies are paid through the Capital Account and that the budgetary provision relates to the administration of the scheme. He confirmed that the Council is currently in discussions with 7-8 Group Water Schemes and these are processing well with works due to commence design planning stage in early 2016. Mr. Gilhooly outlined that grants for individual wells can only be considered where there is no other water service available.

In response to queries raised Mr John McKeon, A/Head of Finance advised that 48 staff are Water working under a Service Level Agreement with Irish Water. He outlined that the reduction in the provision of Local Authority Water Services is because Irish Water has responsibility for the payment of loans that were previously financed by the local authority budget.

In response to queries raised Mr Shay O'Connor advised that metering projects for Irish water were allowed to proceed by private contractors without applying for a road opening licence in order to ensure the timely completion of works. Mr Billy Lowe, Senior Engineer, Water Services outlined that currently there are no protocols in place in relation to road opening licences, however, he outlined that it is anticipated that under the Irish Water Transformation Plan that they will be available in the next six months.

With reference to the matter raised by Councillor Paddy O'Rourke, Mr. Lowe outlined that this matter will be reviewed and the cost of the repairs will be charged to Irish Water to have the local authority reimbursed for costs incurred. He advised that 120 dwellings in the Kiltyclogher area are subject to a Boil Water Notice due to one sample failing and Irish Water will not lift the Boil Notice until such time as these houses are connected to the North Leitrim Regional Water Supply Scheme. Mr. Lowe outlined that these works are due to commence in 2016 and he concluded by stating that no decision has been made in relation to Bulk Meters.

Councillor Justin Warnock said he was disappointed that the Boil Water Notice will remain in place for an extra 12 months.

Division D - Development Management

Mr. John McKeon, A/Head of Finance gave an overview of the provisions in Division D – Development Management.

Councillor Felim Gurn again suggested that Leitrim County Council should have Trade Stands at the Fleadh Ceoil and National Ploughing Championships given the large visitors that attend both events in order to promote Leitrim as tourist destination. He also raised in issue in relation to the signage at Eagles Rock which he stated is confusing for tourists.

Councillor Padraig Fallon supported Councillor Gurn's comments and also proposed that Leitrim Tourism Networks attend such events in order to promote the County and attract people to visit Leitrim as a tourism destination. Councillor Paddy O'Rourke also supported the comments of Councillor Gurn and Councillor Fallon.

Councillor Justin Warnock called for the provision of additional signage on the on the N16 which is part of the Wild Atlantic Way.

Councillor Mary Bohan concurred with the Members comments and noted the importance of developing and growing the tourism sector in Leitrim.

Councillor Sinead Guckian raised an issue in relation to a site at Corroscoffy located off the N4 which she stated is in a dangerous condition and she queried if there was a provision in the budget to address the matter. Councillor Sinead Guckian also queried if there was any provision for promotional signage to be provided on the N4 for Carrick-on-Shannon.

Councillor Sean McGowan supported the issues raised by Councillor Sinead Guckian and he queried if the site at Corroscoffy could be demolished as requested in the past.

Councillor Mary Bohan stated that there is a similar situation with a derelict site in Dromahair, Co. Leitrim.

Councillor Sean McDermott confirmed that discussions are taking place at the 1916 Centenary Committee meetings in relation to providing additional signage on the approach roads to Leitrim.

Mr. Joseph Gilhooly in responding to the queries raised advised that particular Trade Shows are chosen for attendance in conjunction with other agencies such as Bord Failte, Tourism Ireland, Inland Waterways and Leitrim County Council. He outlined that provision has been made provided for dangerous sites and that the Council is currently in the process of pursuing the property owners of the sites referred to by the Members. Mr. Gilhooly advised that he didn't see an issue with funding for promotional signage and this response was welcomed by Councillor Sinead Guckian.

Mr. Frank Curran advised that it is anticipated that the level of funding for the 1916 Centenary Celebrations will be announced in the coming days.

Division E - Environmental Services

Mr. John McKeon, A/Head of Finance gave an overview of the provisions in Division E – Environmental Services.

Councillor Felim Gurn welcomed the provision for the maintenance of graveyards, he also requested an update on the status of the proposal for a new Fire Station to be provided in Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim.

Councillor Sinead Guckian sought an update on National discussions taking place with regard to Fire Crew number and she also sought an update in regard to the operation times and development of the recycling centres.

Councillor Justin Warnock welcomed funding for the maintenance of graveyards and stated that the funding will assist in addressing maintenance issues in St. Clare's Graveyard, Manorhamilton.

Councillor Brendan Barry noted that the Landfill aftercare costs were very high and queried if this work could be completed by local authority staff as an alternative to being contracted out.

Mr. Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation in responding to the queries raised stated that funding for the maintenance of graveyards will have progressed in conjunction with communities and this will be discussed at the Environmental, Transportation and Infrastructural SPC. He confirmed that there will be no changes in relation to the operation of the recycling centres.

Ms. Mary Quinn provided a response in relation to the proposed new Fire Station in Manorhamilton and she confirmed that options to identify a suitable site in Manorhamilton continue to be pursued. Ms. Quinn outlined that the reduction in the provision for the operation of the Fire Services is due to a reduction in training costs and is not as a result of any change in crew numbers.

Councillor Des Guckian raised an issue in relation to income arising from the Bottle Banks he outlined that Rehab are receiving €5 per tonne for bottles and queried if greater revenue could be generated for the local authority by reviewing the rate.

Mr. Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning, Environment and Transportation advised that the charge is party to a national scheme with Repak and that there is no provision to increase the fee charged.

Division F - Recreation & Amenity

Mr. John McKeon, A/Head of Finance gave an overview of the provisions in Division F – Recreation & Amenity.

Councillor Des Guckian pointed out that the Library Service loans would be free from now on and he expressed his concerns that he wouldn't want to see any reduction in the number of Library staff currently employed by the local authority.

Councillor Justin Warnock expressed his concerns in relation to the lack of recreation and amenity amenities in the Kinlough/Tullaghan area and he called for additional recreational amenities to be provided.

Councillor Martin Kenny queried if there was any provision for additional playgrounds in the County.

Mr. Curran stated that funding for additional playgrounds may be pursued through Leader funding and that the Council may also explore funding opportunities under Leader to provide additional recreational facilities in Kinlough/Tullaghan.

Councillor Sean McDermott supported Councillor Justin Warnock comments in relation to the provision of additional recreational facilities in Kinlough/Tullaghan.

Division G - Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare

Mr. John McKeon, A/Head of Finance gave an overview of the provisions in Division G – Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare.

Councillor Sean McGowan welcomed that €20,000 for Land Drainage had been maintained and he pointed out that a lot of work still remains to be done. He referred to a meeting he attended in Mohill recently in relation to flooding of lands. Councillor Sean McGowan proposed that the

Department of Agriculture should provide funding for flooding as this is a huge problem throughout the country.

Councillor Justin Warnock confirmed that the Rural Development Monitoring Committee are looking at the introduction of a land drainage scheme for farmers which would be beneficial for them.

Councillor Martin Kenny said that €20,000 per annum has been a big help, as there was no provision made for a period of 4-5 years. He pointed out that an additional €20,000 should be provided for in Land Drainage, as this has a huge impact on roads.

Councillor Seadhna Logan stressed land drainage needs to be addressed.

Councillor Enda Stenson emphasised that tributaries need to be cleaned first, as this has a knock on effect and this should become a national issue.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke referred to a number of roads which were made good recently and with the large amount of rain that fell, it resulted in these roads being under water for 2-3 days. Councillor Paddy O'Rourke stated that no other agency would allow this to happen and the reality of the problem is drainage. Councillor Paddy O'Rourke insisted that sufficient money should be made available from the Government to deal with this issue.

Councillor Des Guckian said that when the Shannon is shallow, the silt should be cleaned out and then drainage of lands should take place.

Councillor Frank Dolan re-iterated that this is a national issue and it has been raised at Regional Assembly meetings.

Mr Shay O'Connor, Senior Engineer, Infrastructure acknowledged that there is not enough of funding available to deal with this issue and he said that there are 57kms of drains and rivers that need to be cleaned. He outlined that discussions are ongoing with the OPW in relation to seeking additional funding.

Councillor Martin Kenny proposed that an additional €10,000 should be provided for in the budget for this provision. Councillor Sean McGowan supported this proposal.

Mr Shay O'Connor pointed out that discussions are currently taking place with the OPW and the outcome of these discussions should be awaited.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke queried if there was any indication if there is a possibility of an increase in the Roads Budget for 2016.

Mr Curran advised that there is no indication that the Roads Allocation for 2016 will be increased however, he stated that it is anticipated that a similar level of funding as provided in 2015 will be maintained.

Division H - Miscellaneous Services

Mr John McKeon, A/Head of Finance gave an overview of the provisions in Division H – Miscellaneous Services.

Councillor Martin Kenny queried what is covered by Plant and Machinery operations.

Mr John McKeon, A/Head of Finance advised that this is a build up fund for replenishing machinery.

Councillor Justin Warnock expressed his disappointment in relation to the funding provided to the Agriculture Sector in the County. He stated that Agriculture had contributed so much to the local economy but had never received any significant investment of funding.

15/181

23/11/2015 Adoption of Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31st December 2016

Mr. Frank Curran, Chief Executive outlined that the Members had gone through the Budget in detail and it was now a matter for them to consider the adoption of the Budget as presented.

Councillor Frank Dolan complimented the staff of Leitrim County Council who have prepared a budget with low resources and he proposed the adoption of the Budget as presented.

This was seconded by Councillor Paddy O'Rourke.

Councillor Des Guckian insisted that the budget should not be adopted as many services are missing from our communities e.g. post offices, empty community halls and he called for the support of the Members to refuse to adopt the budget as presented and call on the Government to provide an additional increase in funding of €25 million.

Councillor Martin Kenny agreed with Councillor Des Guckian that the level of funding provided by the Local Government Fund to Leitrim County Council is inadequate given that Leitrim has such a low rate base. Councillor Kenny stated that he didn't consider that the request for additional funding would be sanctioned and he acknowledged that the budget as presented should be adopted by the Members.

Councillor Mary Bohan paid tribute to the staff that prepared the budget and acknowledged the difficult decisions that have to be made because of the limited financial resources available to the local authority.

Proposed by Councillor Frank Dolan, seconded by Councillor Paddy O'Rourke AND AGREED;

"That Leitrim County Council adopts for the financial year ending 31st December 2016, the Budget set out in Tables A - F, and further resolves to determine in accordance with the said Budget the rates set out in Table A to be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for 2016 for the purposes set out in those Tables."

15/182

23/11/2015 Determination of Annual Rate on Valuation

Proposed by Councillor Paddy O'Rourke, seconded by Councillor Sean McGowan AND AGREED by all of the Members with the exception of Councillor Des Guckian;

"That Leitrim County Council hereby determines in accordance with the Budget as proposed and adopted by the Members, the Annual Rate on Valuation to be levied for the several purposes specified in the Budget for the financial year ending 31st December, 2016."

Certification

The Leas Cathaoirleach and the Chief Executive then signed the Statutory Certificate to the effect that at the Budget Meeting of Leitrim County Council held this 23rd November 2015, the Council by resolution adopted for the financial year ending 31st December 2016, the Budget set out in Tables (A to F) and by resolution determined in accordance with the said budget the Rates set out in Tables (B and C) to be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for that year for the purposes set out in those tables.

The Leas Cathaoirleach thanked the Chief Executive and the A/Head of Finance for the Budget Book as presented. He also thanked the Members for their contribution. The Members in turn thanked the Leas Cathaoirleach and Staff for the manner in which the meeting had been presented and conducted. Mr. Frank Curran, Chief Executive thanked all involved in the preparation of the Budget and in particular Mr John McKeon, A/Head of Finance. He also thanked the Cathaoirleach, Leas Cathaoirleach and the Members.

Councillor Frank Dolan and Councillor Justin Warnock who are nominated members of the North Western Regional Authority paid tribute to Mr Frank Curran, Chief Executive on the excellent presentation he delivered recently at a meeting of the Regional Assembly on Local Economic Community Plans.

Councillor Mary Bohan advised Members that the January Council meeting will be on the 11th January, 2016 in Kiltyclogher Community Centre.

This concluded the business of the meeting at 2.05 p.m.

SIGNED:

**Councillor John McCartin
Cathaoirleach**

**Sinead Flynn
Meetings Administrator**

DATE: 11th January, 2016