

WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL**Minutes of Meeting of Wexford County Council Held on Monday 25th November 2024
in the Council Chamber at 8.30am (with some remote attendance via Microsoft Teams)****Attendance:****In the Chair:** Cllr. Pip Breen, Cathaoirleach**Councillors:**

Barden	Pat (online)	Kenny	Donal	Shannon	Raymond (online)
Boland	Nicky	Laffan	Garry (online)	Sheehan	Michael (online)
Browne	Aidan	Lawlor	George	Staples	Frank (online)
Byrne	Cathal	McDonald	Darragh (online)	Staples	Robbie (online)
Carthy	Ger (online)	McDonald	Lisa	Sullivan	Joe (online)
Codd	Jim (online)	Murphy	Barbara- Anne	Walsh	Catherine Biddy
Donohoe	Anthony	Murphy	Bridín (online)	Walsh	Oliver
Farrell	Mary (online)	Murphy	Marty		
Forde	Tom	O'Brien	Aoife Rose		
Kavanagh	Paddy	O'Rourke	John		
Kehoe	Pat	Ó Súilleabháin	Fionntán		

Officials:

Ms. A. Byrne, A/Director of Services
 Mr. M. Drea, County Secretary
 Ms. C. Godkin, Director of Services
 Mr. E. Hore, Director of Services
 Ms. L. Hore, Director of Services
 Mr. S. Howell, A/Director of Services
 Ms. L. Lacey, Head of Finance
 Mr. E. Taaffe, Chief Executive

Apologies:

Cllr. John Dwyer, Cllr. John Fleming

Sympathy:

The Cathaoirleach offered the sympathy of the Council to Cllr. John Fleming on the passing of his sister Mary Barron née Fleming.

1. Opening address – Mr. Eddie Taaffe, Chief Executive

Mr. E. Taaffe advised that due to the funding decisions taken by the Members, the Executive is able to propose:

- An €800,000 increase in the housing maintenance budget.
- A €78,000 increase in the General Municipal Allocation.
- The establishment of a sinking fund for our pools and attractions.

Mr. E. Taaffe advised that the budget will provide for high quality services in 2025.

2. Draft Budget Overview – Presentation

Ms. L. Lacey gave a presentation which outlined the following:

- Backdrop to budget 2025
- Funding position for 2025
- Budget 2025 income and expenditure summary
- Expenditure and income movement overview
- 2025 Budget decisions to be made, including:
 - Section 1 – 2025 Decision on Local Adjustment Factor for LPT
 - Section 2 – Commercial Rates 2025 & ARV
 - Section 3 – General Municipal Allocations
 - Section 4 – Rates on Vacant Properties
 - Section 5 – Small Business Support Scheme 2025 (SBSG)
 - Section 6 – Conclusions/Recommendations

3. Draft Budget 2025

Consideration of Statutory Budget Tables

Ms. L. Lacey then brought the Members through each line of the budget tables and together with her colleagues from the Management Team responded to queries from the Members on a number of elements of the Draft Budget, as follows:

Division A

- Significant increase noted in A05 homeless services – Is there potential for more permanent solutions such as Distillery Road?
- Where is the increase in the housing maintenance budget being funded from?
- A0104, A0101 and A0401 – What is the difference between these items? Request for funding for footpaths.
- Is the excess income in housing being spent in other areas? Could it be used to provide footpaths in housing estates?
- Increase in homeless expenditure welcomed. Request that additional funding will go towards keeping the cold weather beds open for longer.

- Observation that many housing estates were built to accommodate parking for one car only. Request that funding be provided for a pilot project to provide additional parking.
- A02 – Is this the budget for taking in charge of housing estates?

Division B

- Disappointment expressed that there isn't significant additional funding for roads. Mr. E. Hore and the District Engineers were commended for their work.
- Is there any change to the winter maintenance programme? Request that more rural roads be gritted.
- How much is being saved by switching to LED public lighting?
- Request for funding for a pedestrian crossing in a rural village.
- Observation that the Department should be providing more funding for roads to deal with the impact of climate change.
- Request that pedestrian crossings be provided at all playgrounds.
- Request that line markings be renewed on minor roads.

Division C

- C0501 – Does this relate to individual well grants? How long does it take to process a grant application?
- What are service support costs made up of?
- C0501 – How many public conveniences do we have around the County. Do we outsource maintenance of these? Will public conveniences transfer to Uisce Éireann.
- Request to clarify differential between income and expenditure in this division.

Division D

- What does the €1.2m expenditure in Forward Planning relate to?
- D602 and D603 – What does the expenditure on Rapid and social inclusion relate to as WLD now lead on this?
- It was noted that no specific project is identified for Rosslare Municipal District.
- Request that planning application costs be circulated to the Members.
- Observation that there is no relativity between the cost of processing a planning application and the fees received.
- What does Enforcement Costs cover?
- Unfinished housing estates – Is this expenditure for works to facilitate taking in charge of estates?
- What support is provided for the National Heritage Park?
- Request for investment in a heritage facility in north Wexford.
- Request for appointment of dedicated Irish Officer.

Division E

- How much does it cost to clean up after fly tipping?
- Consideration should be given to adopting an initiative similar to the "Pure Mile Initiative".
- Request for extension of footpaths in Bunclody.
- What is the €1.2m expenditure under E1501 for?
- Request for explanation of landfill costs.

- Observation that there doesn't appear to be any income associated with E1004. Query if there is potential to earn income before the site is disposed of.

Division F

- Observation that Enniscorthy is €65,000 down on expenditure. Request for increased funding for Enniscorthy festivals in 2025.
- How much funding is provided for Enniscorthy and Bunclody swimming pools?
- Request that the mobile library service be extended to take in Ballyroebuck school.
- What does expenditure under F0404 cover?
- What is the breakdown of the arts administration costs?
- Request for confirmation that the playground in Kilmuckridge will be progressed.

Division G

- Is sufficient funding provided under G0404 given the change in legislation re: XL Bullies.

Division H

- If the budget is adopted, will Wexford County Council pursue landlords who have vacant commercial premises but won't sell or won't lease.
- What is the shortfall between income and expenditure?
- Change to the rates abatement scheme welcomed.
- Observation that a lot of vacant properties are subject to preservation orders and view expressed that levies on properties in Templeshannon should not be increased until the regeneration of Templeshannon has been completed.
- View expressed that H0303 expenditure is very high and efforts to reduce this figure welcomed.
- Importance of tackling dereliction in our towns and villages emphasised.
- View expressed that the rates abatement scheme should be wound down over time.
- What percentage of housing stock requires upgrades to windows and doors?

Decision on Rates Abatement Scheme (vacant properties)

Recommendation to retain tiered basis with bands as follows:

- Apply 60% relief for all properties with annual rates to €2,000
- Apply 50% relief for properties with annual rates over €2,000 and less than €10,000
- Apply 30% relief for properties with annual rates over €10,000

On the proposal of Cllr. B.A. Murphy, seconded by Cllr. D. Kenny, the Council resolved to adopt a scheme for the abatement of rates due to it by liable persons, or classes of liable persons, in respect of vacant properties in accordance with the provisions of Section 9 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019. The scheme provides for a tiered abatement of rates of 30%, 50% or 60% on vacant premises as provided for in Section 9 (1) of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act of 2019 for the financial year ending 31st of December 2025.

Recommendation – adopt landlord/property owner scheme, as per draft abatement scheme (in accordance with Part 9 of the Local Government Act 2001).

On the proposal of Cllr. B.A. Murphy, seconded by Cllr. D. Kenny, the Council resolved to adopt a landlord/property owner grant scheme, as per the draft abatement scheme in accordance with Part 9 of the Local Government Act 2001.

Agreement of proposals for Local Rates Schemes for SMEs

Recommendation - retain existing Small Business Support Scheme.

On the proposal of Cllr. J. O'Rourke, seconded by Cllr. O. Walsh, the Council resolved to retain the existing Small Business Support Scheme in accordance with Part 9 of the Local Government Act 2001.

Adoption of Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV)

Recommendation – Retain ARV of €0.253

On the proposal of Cllr. J. O'Rourke, seconded by Cllr. B.A. Murphy, in accordance with section 6 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019 as amended, the Council resolved to adopt the Annual Rate on Valuation of €0.253 applicable in the calculation of the amount of the rate under Section 4 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019, as amended.

Adopt 2025 Budget with or without amendment

Having considered the Chief Executive's Draft Budget of Wexford County Council for the year ending 31st December 2025, and subject to the provisions of Section 103 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended, on the proposal of Cllr. B.A. Murphy, seconded by Cllr. G. Lawlor, the Council resolved to adopt the Draft Budget for 2025 without amendment.

Ms. L. Lacey thanked Mr. S. Begley, Ms. A.M. Colfer, Mr. D. Noonan, and Ms. L. Berney for their efforts in drafting the budget.

4. 3 Year Capital Programme 2025 - 2027

On the proposal of Cllr. B.A. Murphy, seconded by Cllr. O. Walsh in accordance with Section 135(2) of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, the Council resolved to adopt the Capital Programme 2025 – 2027.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

Daingithe ar an

lá de Nollaig, 2024.

Cllr. Pip Breen
Cathaoirleach

Michael Drea,
County Secretary