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MIONTUAIRISCÍ DE CHRUINNIÚ CHOMHALTAÍ CHEANTAR BARDASACH THRÁ LÍ CHUN DRÉACHT-BHUISÉAD A MHEAS, AGUS CHUN GLACADH LEIS, DO CHEANTAR BARDASACH THRÁ LÍ DO 2017, MAR A BHÍ I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, DÉ HAOINE AN 24 DEIREADH FÓMHAIR 2016.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF TRALEE TO CONSIDER AND ADOPT A DRAFT BUDGETARY PLAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF TRALEE FOR 2017 HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER ÁRAS AN CHONTAE TRALEE ON MONDAY 24th OCTOBER, 2016.

PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR

Councillors/Comhairleoirí

P. Daly	T Ferris
N Foley	J Finucane
S Locke	T McEllistrim
G Spring	P McCarthy
T. O'Brien	

In attendance/i láthair

Mr. C O'Sullivan	A/Delegated Executive for the MD of Tralee
Mr. B. Reidy	A/Meetings Administrator
Ms. A McAllen	Head of Finance
Ms. J Maher	Financial/Management Accountant
Ms. K Lynch	SEO Finance
Ms. N O'Sullivan	SEO Community
Mr. J McCarthy	AO Finance
Ms. H Switzer	AO Community

Mayor T O'Brien took the Chair.

The meeting commenced at 2.30pm

16.10.24.01 Draft Budgetary Plan for the Municipal District of Tralee for 2017

Mr. C O'Sullivan A/Delegated Executive for the Tralee Municipal District read the following report into the record of the meeting:

"1. Background

Section 102 (4A)(a) of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014) provides that the Chief Executive shall consult the Municipal District Members for each Municipal District in the local authority's functional area in the preparation of a draft local authority budget and, for that purpose, a draft budgetary plan for the municipal district shall be prepared under the direction of the Chief Executive and submitted for consideration by the Members of each Municipal District. The purpose of a draft budgetary plan is to provide each Municipal District with an opportunity to allocate its portion of the General Municipal Allocation according to its own priorities.

The Draft Budgetary Plan sets out how any General Municipal District Allocation (GMA) allocated to the Municipal District will be spent. The definition of the GMA is provided for in the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations, 2014, and is the name given to the discretionary funding which is made available to municipal district members for allocation in the draft budgetary plan. The amount an authority can provide by way of a GMA is dependent on the total level of income available to it and the non-discretionary costs that must be met as a first call on that income, including at municipal district level. The Chief Executive must consider the resource needs of the local authority in determining the overall level of the GMA. The GMA is also considered in context of the Budget Strategy discussion with the CPG and other Budget Strategy decisions. The estimate of the non-discretionary costs of the authority must also be taken into account.

Consideration on the main, strategic non-discretionary expenditure of the Council will form part of the Statutory Budget Meeting to take place in November.

Guidance issued from DOHPCLG provides that the total amount of GMA provided must be allocated by the Chief Executive to each municipal district in a manner that is fair and equitable. The Chief Executive must consider the resource needs; where appropriate, the population; and should make an allocation that is transparent, just, not arbitrary, and provides a minimum level of discretionary allocation to all districts.

2. Guiding Principles – General Municipal District Allocation

In its consideration of the Budget Strategy for 2017 in September the decision of Council to retain the Local Property Tax rate for 2017 has enabled the retention of the overall General Municipal Allocation and makes a significant positive contribution to the overall budgetary position.

The total allocation for the General Municipal Allocation for 2017 is €1.707mn across the four Municipal Districts in the County. This is a very significant allocation based on the overall Budget and the level of discretionary expenditure available to the Council. The division will be targeted to yield the highest return to each Municipal District.

It must be noted that there are no additional resources available to the Council for the General Municipal Allocation and accordingly the allocation is made from existing financial resources which will be realigned to prioritise key actions of the Local and Economic Community Plan, Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for Jobs.

The following guiding principles have been applied in determining the level of General Municipal Allocation:

○ ***Councillor Specific Municipal District Operations Fund***

Councillor Specific Municipal District Operations Fund forms part of the Municipal District Allocation. Councillors allocations have been maintained at €29,000 per Council Member for 2017. This will continue to be a Discretionary Fund for allocation by Members in a flexible manner according to their own priorities across all areas of work operations within the Municipal District, as outlined in the scheme agreed in 2015.

○ ***General Municipal Allocation – Rural and Village Development***

The Community Support Fund (CSF) is entering its third year of operation and to date has provided a valuable contribution to economic and social activities throughout the County. Funding under a variety of schemes has become available through national initiatives, including;

- *Town & Village Renewal Scheme (TVR)*
- *REDZ – Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ)*
- *Rural Recreation Fund (RRF)*
- *Recreational Tourism Projects*
- *LEADER*
- *Designated Urban Centre Grant Scheme*
- *Fáilte Ireland Grant Scheme*

A challenge that faces the Council and the Local Community is the provision of matching funding that is required as part of the grant application assessment in relation to the majority of the above grant schemes.

○ *In framing the 2017 CSF for the Tralee Municipal District, Kerry County Council has sought to maximise the opportunities provided by alternative sources of funding, by optimising the multiplier effect of ring-fencing a portion of funding as matching funding for these National Grant schemes. The opportunity to leverage investment by maximising the potential of the Town and Village renewal scheme, REDZ scheme and Fáilte Ireland grants in particular, has potential to add substantial value to the Tralee Municipal District. This is evidenced by the allocation proposed of €40,000 under the “Rural and Village Development” subdivision of the CSF, which has the potential to yield €160,000 of additional critical investment into the Tralee Municipal District.*

○ *During the 2016 period to date, Kerry County Council in association with the local community and local development sector is delivering a number of schemes in the Tralee Municipal District under Town and Village Renewal and REDZ Schemes (Rural Economic Development Zones). Some of these schemes will be finalised in the 2017 period and include the following projects:*

- *Island of Geese (REDZ)*

- *Smarter Travel Projects*
- *Provision of land for Amenity/Sports purposes in Ardfert*
- *Development of a Public Realm Improvement Plan and Improvement Works to Village Entrance - Fenit (TVR)*

In addition to these projects a number of amenity and development projects have been identified in the Tralee Municipal District as part of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), LEADER Strategy and the Kerry Tourism Strategy, all of which provide a blueprint for economic and social development and investment in the County. Many of these projects will require significant investment from Kerry County Council and external funding sources, where elements of these projects could be delivered through a co-funding arrangement with the CSF. Some of these projects for Tralee include:-

- *Design of Tralee-Fenit Greenway (Fáilte Ireland)*
- *Blennerville Steam Train and Windmill (Fáilte Ireland)*
- *Canal Bank Walks*
- *Village Enhancements (Brosna)*

General Municipal District Allocation - Community Support/Community Initiatives

This element of the fund will support community initiatives of the Tralee Municipal District in line with the CSF guidelines agreed with Members in 2016. The amount allocated to this area is €98,000.

General Municipal District Allocation – Town Development Projects

It is important that the former Town Council Development funds are maintained and they are budgeted towards project based delivery for Tralee. €100,000 has been allocated to this area.

3. General Municipal Allocation– Tralee Municipal District

The General Municipal Allocation for Tralee Municipal District for 2017 is as follows:

Community Support Fund Tralee MD	Amount of Funding	Potential Yield
<i>Rural & Village Development (Town & Village Renewal, REDZ, LEADER)</i>	€40,000	€160,000
<i>Community Support /Community Initiatives</i>	€98,000	
<i>Town Development Projects</i>	€100,000	
Municipal District Development Fund	€238,000	€160,000
Councillor Specific Municipal District Operations Fund	€261,000	
Total General Municipal Allocation Tralee	€499,000	
Overall Investment to Tralee Municipal District	€659,000	

4. Conclusion

This Draft Budgetary Plan sets out the General Municipal Allocation for 2017 and the principles governing its proposed application. This Plan must be considered by Members at a Meeting of the Municipal District Members, and in accordance with Regulations, this Meeting must conclude no later than 10 days prior to the local authority budget meeting. There is no provision for the adjournment of this meeting. Following consideration of the Draft Budgetary Plan the Municipal District Members shall by resolution adopt the Draft Budgetary Plan, with or without amendment. The making of amendments is a reserved function.

The Chief Executive shall take account of any budgetary plan adopted by the Municipal District Members in preparing the Draft Local Authority Budget for 2017. If the members of any Municipal District do not adopt a draft budgetary plan, the Chief Executive may take account of the draft budgetary plan as presented to members of that Municipal District, without amendment.

Following adoption of the Council Budget for 2017, a Schedule of Proposed Works of Maintenance and Repair to be carried out during the financial year in each Municipal District is prepared as soon as possible under the direction of the Chief Executive, having regard to available resources. The draft budgetary plans of the Municipal Districts do not include the main strategic non-discretionary expenditure of the Local Authority, the spending of which will be prioritised by the Members as part of the development of a schedule of municipal district works after the budget has been adopted. The Schedule of Municipal District Works shall be considered by the Municipal District Members concerned and be adopted by resolution, with or without amendment by it. In making an amendment the Municipal District Members shall have due regard to the Council budget adopted.

I recommend adoption of the General Municipal Allocation for Tralee Municipal District for 2017 of €499,000. This fund represents a meaningful discretionary fund for allocation by Members in accordance with the priorities of the District, optimises grant opportunities and provides maximum flexibility to meet the operation and economic and community development needs of the area for the coming year with a projected investment of €659,000 to the Tralee Municipal District Area.”

Cllr. T. Ferris expressed concern that the Draft Budget was presented without consultation with members of the Sinn Féin Party or Cllr. Locke who got a combined vote of 40% of the total vote in the last Local Election. The Mayor/Cathaoirligh of each of the MDs met with the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance to agree the share out of the Community Support Fund but as Sinn Féin do not hold any of these positions they were not represented at the meeting despite the fact that this was brought to management's attention on three occasions. She understood any changes to commercial rates are a reserved function of the MDs and she asked why this was not on the Agenda. Cllr. Ferris asked that the wording for Councillors Allocations would be simplified as the general public do not understand the present title. She suggested that members should meet in committee before the end of the year with a view to allocating funding jointly to certain projects which would ensure better value for money.

Cllr. P. Daly referred to the proposed walk from Tralee IT to the Canal under the Smarter Travel initiative and expressed concern that it was not progressing. He submitted a proposal to the meeting of the Mayor/Cathaoirleach that provision would be made to progress this project in 2017. However, he did not get a response from management. There will be just 700 yards of the walk along the river and it should be possible to progress it. The Sinn Féin view on LPT is that the ordinary worker is already paying enough tax and they want to limit the amount of tax that lower and middle income workers must pay.

Cllr. J. Finucane stated Tralee town needs projects to drive the economy and a number of projects are being advanced including the Denny Site, the new Gael Scoil and the Advanced Unit. He agreed with Cllr. Ferris that Councillors Allocations should be used for public works and there should be greater flexibility on this. Cllr. Finucane welcomed the appointment of an Economic Officer and added that he sought the appointment of a staff member to identify EU funding. In conclusion Cllr. Finucane PROPOSED that the Draft Budgetary Plan for the Tralee MD for 2017 be adopted.

Cllr. S. Locke expressed concern that a number of projects that were proposed are not mentioned in the report. The requirement that the repair of footpaths must now be funded from Councillors Allocations will be very demanding on their allocations.

Cllr. N. Foley acknowledged the work that went into compiling the Report circulated. When the Town Council was in existence the town had its own Budget and benefitted from it. The allocation per member for Councillors Allocations is not adequate to cover both the town of Tralee and all other areas in the Municipal District. She concurred with the suggestion by Cllr. Ferris that members should meet to consider the allocation of their Councillors Allocations to certain projects. In conclusion Cllr. Foley asked that the Hardship Fund would be agreed earlier in the year.

Cllr. G. Spring referred to the allocation of " 40,000 to Rural & Village Development and he asked if projects have been identified in the Tralee MD to avail of this funding. He agreed that members should work as a team in allocating funding from the Municipal District Operations Fund and he agreed that projects should benefit the economy of the entire MD. Cllr. Spring SECONDED Cllr. Finucane's proposal that the Draft Budgetary Plan for the Tralee MD for 2017 be adopted.

Cllr. P. McCarthy also supported the adoption of the Draft Budgetary Plan. He asked if a 25% contribution is required for the projects set out on Page 3 of the Report. Cllr. McCarthy asked if funding will be provided for Féile na mBláth from the Community Support Fund in 2017. The roof and toilets at Fenit are leaking and Cllr. McCarthy requested that they would be repaired.

Ms. N. O'Sullivan advised that the Féile na mBláth Committee can apply for funding under the Community Support initiative.

Cllr. Ferris asked if the potential yield from Rural & Village Development in 2017 is " 800,000.

Ms. N. O'Sullivan clarified that the " 450,000 mentioned in the report for the Town and Village Renewal Scheme includes a 15% local contribution. The Department has confirmed national funding of " 12m for the next round of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme but details of matching funding have not been confirmed for 2017.

Cllr. T. Ferris stated when the Town Councils were amalgamated Tralee Town Council had a reserve of " 10m and at that time members were informed it would be set aside for projects in Tralee. She could not recall any major developments in Tralee in the interim other than the Smarter Travel initiative which she understood approx. " 1m was allocated to. She asked if the balance of " 9m was ring fenced for Tralee town and she requested a detailed report on this account.

Mayor T. O'Brien concurred with the views expressed by previous speakers in relation to the allocation of Councillors Allocations for 2017 and added that on occasion he believed members were paying over the odds for some jobs. He understood that Tralee Town and the Municipal Area pay their fair share in rates and charges each year. There was a discussion on Radio recently when the members of one MD claimed the income from their MD was supporting other MDs. He believed that Tralee is probably contributing more than most MDs. In conclusion Mayor O'Brien thanked Ms. McAllen and her staff for their work in compiling the 2017 Draft Budgetary Plan.

Mr. C. O'Sullivan referred to Cllr. Daly's query regarding the proposed Smarter Travel project to provide a recreational walk from Tralee IT to Blennerville and he advised members that it was proposed that the option of having the route by the river would be a safer option. However this will require greater funding and discussions are ongoing with the Department on it. The Smarter Travel unit is being continued into 2017 when the priority will be improvements to the Mall. Mr. O'Sullivan acknowledged the need to provide more walkways and cycle ways in the town and added that the walkways already in place are well utilised.

Cllr. Daly asked if funding could be allocated from Councillors Allocations and the Community Support Fund for this project as just a short section of land will need to be acquired.

In response Mr. O'Sullivan stated the cost of delivering the recreational route by the big river will be significant and consideration can be given to allocating funding from Councillors Allocations for it. The Hardship and Emergency Scheme is not advertised and it is not possible to predict if there will be a demand for it or not in a particular year. However members could allocate a certain amount towards it at the start of the year and if it is not required they can utilise it later. Almost " 1m is allocated for Councillors Allocations from the Roads Maintenance Budget each year and a substantial portion of this is for works carried out by Council staff.

Ms. A. McAllen advised that provisionally 25% of a local contribution has been provided for the various schemes as the contribution required varies from Scheme to Scheme. Communities can apply for LEADER funding also. Ms. McAllen acknowledged that a decision on rates on vacant To Let properties is a matter for each MD, however it must be considered at the Budget Meeting of the full Council in the first instance. The 2015 figure for strike offs could inform the

discussion and there are various reasons for write offs e.g. bad debt provision, vacant disused properties, rates on vacant properties to let. Ms. McAllen undertook to examine this matter further. She assured members that the capital fund for each of the former Town Councils was ring fenced for the respective towns. However liabilities for each of the Town Councils also transferred to Kerry County Council in particular a loan for lands at Lohercannon.

Cllr. Ferris asked that the actual figures for the capital account, including how much was spent and on what projects would be provided to members at the Budget Meeting.

Ms. McAllen highlighted that the Island of Geese project will require an element of own resource funding. She added that it would be more appropriate to produce these figures at the end of the financial year.

Mr. C. O'Sullivan advised that the redevelopment of the Island of Geese will require significant capital investment and if funding was set aside for particular projects it cannot be used for any other purpose. The Local Government Auditor monitors this annually.

Cllr. Ferris pointed out there are a number of very good ideas for projects for the town and " 1m would bring a number of them to fruition. A private company also has plans for a Blueway by the Canal.

Cllr. G. Spring requested clarification on the " 40,000 provided for Rural & Village Development from the Community Support Fund.

Ms. N. O'Sullivan explained that " 40,000 is ring fenced as the local contribution to grant schemes which would have a potential yield of up to " 160,000. A sum of " 98,000 is also provided for Community Support/Community Initiatives and the list on Page 3 is not the final list. An application is with the Department under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme seeking funding of " 76,000 for Fenit where the matching funding requirement is just " 14,000. The MD Officers are working with local communities and development companies to identify projects for 2017.

Cllr. G. Spring stated projects must meet certain criteria and he asked what would happen if they did not satisfy the criteria.

Ms. McAllen informed the members the " 40,000 matching funding is ring fenced for the Tralee MD and it is important to ensure projects are ready. That is why Municipal District Officers are working with communities to develop their ideas. This will re-energise community groups and if the Draft Budget, including the Community Support Fund allocation for Tralee, is adopted it will guarantee the " 40,000 matching funding for Tralee MD.

Cllr. S. Locke requested a list of works to be undertaken and also the completion date for the works. Blennerville Steam Train is ongoing for years and he requested a timescale for when this project will be finalised.

Draft Budgetary Plan Tralee MD

Ms. A. McAllen stated the Grant Schemes are finite and the 2016 allocation under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme must be spent by the end of the year. Kerry County Council must ensure that the best projects are submitted for funding and that they can be delivered. She added that of the budgeted rates figure for 2016, "9.4m rates income is reflected for the former Tralee Town Council area.

Cllr. J. Finucane requested that consideration would be given to the sale of serviced sites to first time buyers at a small profit.

A vote was then taken on Cllr. J Finucane's proposal which was seconded by Cllr. Spring as follows:

That we the members of the Municipal District of Tralee resolve to adopt the Draft Budgetary Plan for the Municipal District of Tralee for 2017 as presented.

A vote was taken on this proposal which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. P Daly, T Ferris, J. Finucane, N Foley, S. Locke, P. McCarthy, T McEllistrim, G Spring, T. O'Brien **(9)**

Against: None **(0)**

Not Voting: None **(0)**

The Mayor declared the proposal CARRIED.

The meeting concluded at 3.20 pm.

Beth Reidy
A/Meetings Administrator

Mayor of the Municipal District of Tralee