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**MIONTUAIRISCÍ AN CRUINIÚ DE COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHIARRAÍ  
A THIONÓLADH AR-LÍNE/FÍORÚIL AR AN LUAN, 19 IÚIL 2021**

**MINUTES OF THE PRE-BUDGET MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD  
ONLINE ON MONDAY, 19 JULY 2021**

**PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR**

**Councillors/Comhairleoirí**

Tom Barry	Robert Beasley	Michael Cahill
Brendan Cronin	Charlie Farrelly	Deirdre Ferris
Jim Finucane	Breandán Fitzgerald	Fionnán Fitzgerald
Seamus Fitzgerald	Cathal Foley	Michael Foley
Donal Grady	Jackie Healy-Rae	Maura Healy-Rae
Niall Kelleher	Sam Locke	Dan McCarthy
Jimmy Moloney	Norma Moriarty	Terry O'Brien
Niall O'Callaghan	Bobby O'Connell	John O'Donoghue
Michael O'Shea	Mikey Sheehy	Aoife Thornton
Johnnie Wall		

**IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR**

Ms. M. Murrell, Chief Executive	Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Dir. Rds, Trspn & Marine
Mr. M. Scannell, Dir. Job Cr/Sust. ED	Mr. J. Breen, Director Water Services
Mr. M. O'Donoghue, Director Housing	Ms. A. McAllen, Head of Finance
Mr. C. O'Connor, Director Corp. Servs.	Mr. P. Corkery, Meetings Administrator
Mr. O. O'Shea, Press Officer	Ms. D. Griffin, SO Corporate
Ms. O. O'Shea, CO Corporate	

The meeting commenced at 9.00 a.m.

Cllr. Jimmy Moloney, Cathaoirleach, took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the online Pre-Budget meeting of Kerry County Council.

Mr. P. Corkery, Meeting Administrator, referred Elected Members to the Protocols for Remote Meetings of Kerry County Council. He gave an overview of the protocols, highlighting that attendees are to have their speakers muted until the Cathaoirleach invites them to speak, to use the 'raise hand' function to indicate that they wish to speak. As per Standing Orders recording/photographing the meeting is prohibited. Roll Calls are taken to ensure Members can see and hear proceedings. If the Cathaoirleach indicates an Elected Member is to speak they are to turn on their camera. He welcomed members of the press to today's meeting.

Mr. P. Corkery, Meetings Administrator, said a roll call would now be taken to ensure members can hear and see proceedings.

**Present when Roll Call was taken:**

Cllrs. Robert Beasley, Brendan Cronin, Charlie Farrelly, Deirdre Ferris, Breandán Fitzgerald, Seamus Fitzgerald, Cathal Foley, Michael Foley, Donal Grady, Jackie Healy-Rae, Sam Locke, Dan McCarthy, Norma Moriarty, Terry O'Brien, Bobby O'Connell, John O'Donoghue, Mikey Sheehy, Aoife Thornton, Johnnie Wall, Cathaoirleach Jimmy Moloney **(20)**

**Absent when Roll Call was taken:**

Cllrs. Tom Barry, Michael Cahill, Patrick Connor-Scarteen, Jim Finucane, Fionnán Fitzgerald, John Francis Flynn, Johnny Healy-Rae, Maura Healy-Rae, Niall Kelleher, Mike Kennelly, Marie Moloney, Niall O'Callaghan, Michael O'Shea (13)

**19.07.21.01 Kerry County Council's Budget 2022 – Pre-Budget discussion**

The Chief Executive outlined that the 2020/2021 period faced by Kerry County Council has been unprecedented on so many levels and the challenges faced by the County and its citizens and the economy remain significant. Budget 2022 is framed in this context and the out-turn position for 2021 is contingent on the sustained continuation of very significant Central Government supports. The Commercial Rates Waiver from Central Government for the nine-month period January to September 2021 has been vital not only to support business, but also to support the stability of Kerry County Council's finances. As Kerry County Council moves into the 2022 Budgetary period, several factors will be critical to consider including:

- Long-term impact of the pandemic on the County Rates Base
- Supporting the Economic Recovery of the County aligned to the Economic Recovery Plan

The financial planning which the Council is undertaking for the current period is focused on the commitment to continue to provide and extend our Services over 2022, and advancement of key Capital Infrastructure Developments to the value of €232m for 2022 across the County, which are integral to the Economic Recovery Plan for Kerry.

A factor in the Council's financial planning is the need to increase the local revenue base to support the overall Budget and maintain service delivery for 2022. The Revenue generating powers of the Local Authority are exceptionally limited and, in that context, the Local Property Tax is an essential mechanism by which the Council can raise funds in a given year. The raising of revenue through the Local Property Tax is also central to fund the Local Authority Plans and Services into 2022 and the proposed increase in income at this stage of the Budgetary process will be essential to supporting the Council's Budget later in the year.

Kerry County Council has been very focused over the last number of years on Regeneration projects within our Towns and Villages and it is critical that the County continues to invest in this area. The delivery of this programme, together with the extensive Greenway Programme and Active Travel programme, has the capacity to substantially improve our County as a place to live for our citizens and many visitors and significantly support the economic development of our County.

The Chief Executive highlighted the following Development and Regeneration projects which Kerry County Council has planned for and for which grant funding has been announced, and those regeneration projects of scale which the County intends to advance through Central Competitive Grant Calls over the year ahead.

**Urban and Regeneration Development Fund (URDF)**

Kerry County Council submitted significant Regeneration plans under a competitive call and received significant phased funding for both Tralee and Killarney. Government Funding has required a matching funding allocation from the Local Authority of 25%, as a result these combined grants of €36.5m require a matching contribution of €12.2m.

## Rural Regeneration Projects

Caherciveen Town received an allocation under RRDF of €2.056m in 2021. This grant now allows the Council to bring to Planning stage a number of elements of the €20m Regeneration programme for Caherciveen. The Council's Own Resource requirement on the Design Stage is nearly €700k.

The Council is advancing further Rural Regeneration Projects for which RRDF funding has been allocated. These include the Valentia Cable Station project (€1.72m) and the Dingle/Slea Head Traffic Management Scheme, developed in partnership with Fáilte Ireland.

Over the course of 2021, Kerry County Council proposes to submit further Town Regeneration projects for potential funding under the RRDF scheme. The proposals are submitted on a competitive basis and adjudicated against other national projects.

- Listowel Town Centre Regeneration Plan:
- Killorglin Regeneration Proposal, which will focus on Town Centre upgrade/dereliction and development of Tourism & Heritage buildings

It is estimated that should these projects be successful in the RRDF application process - an Own Resource requirement of €2.5m-€3m will potentially be required.

Other Regeneration Projects to be advanced through Funding Proposals over the coming year include:

- Milltown – Our Rural Future- Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 references the funding for certain areas to complete Masterplans – leading to the development of future projects. It is anticipated that Milltown would require such an approach given the population growth levels and potential Schedule Town status as part of the County Development Plan
- Kerry County Council will engage with Údarás na Gaeltachta and other partners to consider the re-development of the Old Hospital in Dingle
- Advancement of the Climate Decarbonised Zone Projects in Dingle and advancement of the Sustainable Travel Pilot and advancement of a potential funding scheme for the Town Park
- Kerry County Council will work with the local partners in Castleisland to advance, through central co-funding proposals, the redevelopment of the River Walk backland area. This is a sizeable project with potential to rejuvenate this area
- Kenmare – advance proposals through a central funding application for the development of The Peninsula Lands and the Pier.

The above projects reflect some of the significant Regeneration works which are either underway or to be advanced. They do not reflect the significant County Greenway Programme and many other Local Development Projects of a smaller scale across the County. The Council will also work with Fáilte Ireland in respect of projects arising out of the Visitor Development Plans and potential funding opportunities arising.

The large-scale Town Regeneration Projects which have been successfully developed and in-train at this time and those that are at application stage amount to over €100m and will require an Own Resources Contribution of €22m over the coming years.

As part of the financial planning it is estimated that €7m of the County contribution will come from the Capital and Development Contribution Programme. The Council will require a further local contribution of €15m in this respect over the coming years.

The amount of funding available to the Council after consideration of the LPT process – will inform significantly the approach to the Budget process later in the year and inform the level of funding available across all functions and services of the Local Authority.

The Chief Executive said, having assessed the financial needs of the Local Authority at this time, she is requesting the Members of Kerry County Council to consider a Local Property Tax increase of 15% for 2022, which represents an increase of 7.5% on the 2021 Rate. This represents a €2.1m increase on income.

Ms. A. McAllen, Head of Finance, outlined that

- The Government recently announced plans to proceed with a revaluation of Local Property Tax (LPT) later this year, to take effect for the 2022 liability year.
- Heads of a Bill have been published and the intention is that the necessary legislation will be enacted by the Oireachtas before the summer recess.
- The legislation has brought forward the deadline for notifying Revenue of the Local Adjustment Factor (LAF) to 31 August in a revaluation year.
- Clarity has been provided by the Department in June 2021 that the yield from LPT for 2022 will be at least the same as 2021 Baseline: €13,776,761
- Proposed Changes to LPT / Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2021
  - Valuation bands widened for calculating LPT liabilities to ensure that the majority of homeowners are likely to see no change or a decrease when properties revalued on 1st November 2021 (per Dept. of Finance, June 2021)
  - Property valuations to be reviewed every four years
  - New properties will be brought into the system each November
  - Local authorities to retain 100% of LPT collected in their area
  - No. of exemptions reduced
  - Definition of Residential Property

Ms. McAllen outlined examples of the effect of the widening of valuation bands for calculating LPT liabilities. She said today's meeting is a pre-Budget meeting and the LPT Meeting will be held on Monday next, 26 July, 2021.

Cathaoirleach Jimmy Moloney said a decision regarding the LPT is not being made today. Today's meeting is a step in the budgetary process and the meeting to determine the LPT is next Monday, 26 July.

Cllr. Johnnie Wall asked by how much will Kerry County Council's income be reduced.

Cllr. Deirdre Ferris said there has been significant increases in rents which is impacting many people.

Cllr. Donal Grady asked for further information regarding the LPT bands.

Ms. A. McAllen, Head of Finance, said Kerry County Council's income will be impacted. Information regarding the LPT will be circulated to Elected Members with the formal

LPT meeting documentation. The new LPT bands are set out in the Bill. There is provision in the Bill for a number of exemptions, which were previously excluded. The full impact will not be known until all returns are made by LPT payers to Revenue in November.

Cllr. Jackie Healy-Rae said that there are a lot of questions and unknowns in relation to the proposed changes to LPT. Further clarity will be required in order to make an informed decision. He asked for specifics and costs in relation to the River Walk in Castleisland before voting on the LPT.

Cllr. Michael Foley said Elected Members must be fully informed on what projects the LPT is funding in order to inform constituents.

Cllr. Charlie Farrelly said people need to know what they are getting for the LPT and asked for further information regarding the River Walk in Castleisland.

Cllr. Brendan Cronin said what the Head of Finance outlined would indicate that in Kerry the average LPT will be €90 which is a reduction/saving. He asked if this also means there will be a loss of revenue to Kerry County Council. The reduction in LPT income appears to have pushed management to seek a 15% increase on the base LPT. Elected Members were told that revenue from LPT was to fund local services. Yesterday there was no water again in Mid-Kerry, water supply in Listry has been affected again today and it does not look like it will improve in the future. There are massive projects across the county to be funded.

Cllr. Sam Locke referred to the valuation of properties and asked if valuations are to be taken from daft.ie or if property owners must get a valuation on their property, and if so, who does the valuation?

Cllr. Tom Barry said he will base his decision on the situation he is facing on the ground; a situation where people are facing the loss of their home, adding that he fundamentally disagrees with a tax on the family home. He asked for a list of what services will be provided in order that he can consider the request for an increase on the local property tax base rate.

Cllr. Michael O'Shea asked for further information in relation to plans for Milltown. He said there are a lot of projects planned for Kerry and the county must capitalise on the numbers visiting for staycations. If it is agreed as a Council that there is to be an increase on the Local Property Tax, it is for a good reason, the betterment of the county. Every time there has been an increase in the Local Property Tax it has resulted in an amount of projects progressing across the county. Applications under funding schemes should be prioritised in accordance with how the Councillors vote, i.e. if a Councillor votes against the Local Property Tax this should affect the grant application.

Cllr. Fionnán Fitzgerald said excellent projects are planned. He said it is considered that the benefit of the LPT goes to urban areas rather than rural areas and he asked if funding from the LPT could be used, for example, to assist the Local Improvement Scheme in order to give something to rural areas. He asked for further information in relation to the River Walk in Castleisland.

Cllr. Jim Finucane said there are huge issues to be overcome in recovering economically from this pandemic and there is a genuine fear, this is in addition to

Brexit. Depending on state agencies to assist has never worked, e.g. so far there has been no visit from the IDA. The county must develop economically to attract people for tourism and business, but without finances we are a talking shop.

Cllr. Aoife Thornton agreed with Cllr. Fionnán Fitzgerald regarding the urban/rural areas benefiting from LPT, adding that a greater focus is required on the rural areas as many villages cannot see any benefit from this funding.

Ms. A. McAllen, Head of Finance, said for Budget 2022, regardless of income from LPT valuations, the Department has clarified that the yield from LPT for 2022 will be at least the same as 2021 Baseline: €13,776,761. Budget documentation will be circulated to Elected Members for the LPT meeting on Monday, 26 July 2021. There will be a need to revisit the Local Government Fund under changes proposed under this Bill. Information was taken from the draft Bill as it was relevant. The widening of the LPT bands could result in a large number of property owners paying less.

The Chief Executive said the projects set out are the projects that have to be funded. The LPT is an important way of supporting what is critical regeneration of the county's towns and villages. There are plans identified under URDF and RRDF along with a full range of smaller schemes being progressed. Considerable funding has been drawn down and it would be disappointing not to fund projects. There are also significant Fáilte Ireland plans, with projects to be advanced, funded and supported. Notification has been received in the last few days regarding additional significant funding for the Local Improvement Scheme.

The meeting concluded at 10.10 a.m.

**Pádraig Corkery**  
**Meetings Administrator**

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**Cathaoirleach of Kerry County Council**