

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE AN GAILLIMHE

**MINUTES OF STATUTORY BUDGET MEETING FOR GALWAY COUNTY
COUNCIL HELD AT THE ORANMORE LODGE HOTEL, ORANMORE, COUNTY GALWAY, ON
THURSDAY 20TH NOVEMBER 2014 AT 11.00 am**

I LATHAR:

CATHAOIRLEACH:

Cllr. Mary Hoade
Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway

BAILL:

Cllrs. T. Broderick, D. Burke, J. Byrne, N. Byrne, S. Canney, J. Charity, D. Connolly, M. Connolly & G. Cronnelly, Comh. S. O’Cualáin, Cllrs. J. Cuddy & S. Cunniffe, Comh. T. O’Curaoín, Cllrs. S. Donnellan, A. Donohue, M. Fahy, P. Feeney, G. Finnerty, M. Finnerty, T. Healy, P. Hynes, F. Kearney, P. Keaveney, D. Killilea, M. Kinane, M. Maher, E. Mannion, J. McClearn, K. McHugh, T. McHugh, M. Noone, A. Rabbitte, P. Roche & N. Thomas, Comh. S. O’Tuairisg, Cllrs. S. Walsh & T. Welby

OIFIGIGH:

Mr. K. Kelly, Chief Executive (Interim) Mr. G. Mullarkey, Head of Finance, Messrs. J. Cullen, L. Gavin, P. Gavican, Directors of Services; Ms. C. Mc Connell A/Director of Service, Mr Michael Owens, County Secretary & Meetings Administrator, Mr. M. McGovern, Management Accountant, Mr. E. Molloy, Senior Engineer; Ms. B Dooley SEO Human Resources Mr. S Groarke, AO Finance Unit.

Thosnaigh an cruinniú leis an paidir.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the elected members, officials and the press to the Statutory 2015 Budget Meeting. She outlined the format for conducting the meeting, indicating that each member would be afforded a timeframe of 3 minutes for their initial contribution after which the bell would sound. She advised that she would deal with contributions on the Budget from the members first followed by questions & answers. The Cathaoirleach requested the Chief Executive (Interim) to present his report on the budget.

The Chief Executive acknowledged the fact that this was the first budget meeting for the newly elected members and advised that the budget was compiled in accordance with the statutory format. He then referred to his report detailing the main provisions outlined in the Draft Budget for 2015 and a summary report from the Directors of Services in respect of activities in their respective functional areas. His report was as follows:

In accordance with the statutory requirement- issues relating to the preparation of the Budget and the Draft Budget were considered at meetings of the Corporate Policy Group held on 8th July 2014, 15th September 2014 and 6th November 2014.

The Council considered and made its determination on the Local Property Tax adjustment at its meeting held on 22nd September 2014 and each of the Municipal Districts considered the Budgetary Plan for each Municipal District at a series of meetings held between 6th October 2014 and 10th October 2014. The Council may by resolution amend the Draft Budget but shall adopt the Draft Budget, with or without amendment, and determine, in accordance with the Budget so adopted, the annual rate on the valuation to be levied and where appropriate have regard to the base year adjustment – determined in accordance with Section 29 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

The Council is required to complete the statutory process within a period of 14 days. This allows, for the adjournment, if necessary of the statutory meeting which is scheduled for 20th November 2014, provided the process is completed by 4th December 2014.

Base Year Adjustment

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 made statutory provision for the bridging of any gap between the County rate and the rate that was applied in any former town council area. The methodology was by means of a Base Year Adjustment and the merging of the two rates over a period of time not to exceed 10 years. There is a further provision which prohibits the Council from raising the County Rate for the period of the adjustment. Therefore if the adjustment period is 10 years then Galway County Council cannot increase its rate for 10 years. Given that it is 6 years since the rate has increased the retention of this position for a further 10 years would be unsustainable.

The rates being applied in 2014 are €66.59 for the County council area and €52.00 for the former Ballinasloe Town Council area. The former town council areas of Tuam and Loughrea will experience a reduction as they will no longer have to pay a separate town rate. This aspect of the budget was discussed in detail with the Corporate Policy Group.

Essentially two options exist:

- (1) Implement an accounting increase in the County Rate in 2015 and then undertake a base year adjustment for both the County rate and Ballinasloe rate so that neither are actually increased for 2015. The Budget meeting in 2014 is the only point at which this could be done and would have the advantage of facilitating a longer adjustment period between the County and Ballinasloe rates as the possibility of a rate increase would be available to the County during the adjustment period even if such a course of action was not taken.

- (2) Undertake a base year adjustment for the Ballinasloe town rate only. As previously stated this means that the County rate cannot be increased during the adjustment period and therefore a shorter adjustment period would be envisaged. Following discussion with the Corporate Policy Group the Draft Budget is presented on the basis of the latter. At the end of the adjustment period businesses in Ballinasloe will be paying the same rate as all other towns in the County and this will mean an increase of €487,218 on the rate demand attributable to the former Town Council area.

Budget 2015

While the reduction in revenue expenditure between 2008 and 2015 is significant the budget available still provides considerable opportunities for our County and enables the delivery of a vast array of services. It must be borne in mind that part of this revenue spend serves to support the capital investment in the county which is currently in the region of €32 m per annum giving a total investment in the county through Galway County council of approximately €137m each year.

The funding derived from the Local Government Fund in recent years is replaced by the proceeds from the Local Property Tax / Equalisation Fund in 2015. The amount received in 2015 from the proceeds of Local Property Tax is the same as that received in 2014 from the Local Government Fund. The decision of the Elected Members not to reduce the Local Property Tax has ensured this level of funding but with a number of new areas of activity the continuation of the delivery of existing services is challenging.

The budget for 2015 includes an income from the NPPR of €350,000 which includes income from the agreements put in place, by those with a liability to discharge the amount due, to do so over a period of years.

The Members will be aware from their recent discussions on the Municipal District Allocation that the level of discretionary expenditure is extremely low. Much of the budget in any year is comprised of non-discretionary costs such as loan charges, payroll, statutory demands, Insurances, pensions etc or is comprised of expenditure that is assigned to the delivery of particular services.

Given that the funding available is similar to 2014 and the decision of the Members to retain the level of Local Property Tax the draft budget is consistent with that prepared for 2014 and seeks to continue the level of service currently provided. It is recognised that additional funding could be utilised effectively under almost every budget heading but the allocation of further resources has not been possible. The budget for housing maintenance and the Councils contribution to roads from its own resources have been maintained in 2015.

The most significant changes in the figures presented in the Draft Budget arise from the reduction of funding allocations in respect of Irish Water (c.€14m) and Higher Education Grants (c.€3.5m) which were contra items and the incorporation of the budget for the Ballinasloe Town Council area. This included adjustments required from varying accounting practices for example the coding of pensions to the Central Management Charge at County level while they were coded directly to the service in Ballinasloe Town Council.

The issue of Unfinished Housing Estates and the process of Taking in Charge has received on-going attention over the past few years. Much progress has been made utilising funding for safety works and funding from the Site Resolution fund in addition to working with developers and receivers to have issues addressed. However significant issues remain and while it is not possible to provide the level of funding that is desirable an allocation has been made to allow some issues to be addressed on a priority basis. The continuation of funding over a period of years together with the approach of working with others will help to address the more significant issues over a period of time.

Local Authority Structures

The year 2014 has been very significant for all of Local Government including Galway County Council. Following the local elections in June 2014 Galway County Council was reconvened with an increased Membership of 39 Members. The revised legislation framework clearly envisages a greater policy role for council.

The sub county structures of Local Government were revised with the dissolution of Town Council's including Ballinasloe, Loughrea and Tuam and the establishment of 5 Municipal Districts with a set of functions defined in legislation. It is intended that the Municipal Districts will consider more detailed matters relating to the Municipal District Areas.

Work will be on-going over a period of time to ensure that there is no duplication of work between the County and Municipal District structures and that functions are carried out and discussions take place in the appropriate forum.

In June 2014 the Regional Authorities were formally dissolved and the West Regional Authority was replaced by the Border Midlands & Western Regional Assembly. On the 1st January 2015 the three new regional structures will come into effect with Galway being covered by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly.

In response to the new powers entrusted to Local Government the Local Community Development Committee was established firstly on a non-statutory basis and subsequently on a statutory footing and has assumed responsibility for the Local Community Development Programme. In effect the work of this Committee has just begun and in the course of 2015 it is expected that the LCDC will deliver on the completion of tendering of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme and the implementation of arrangements for the delivery management and oversight of the programme.

The LCDC will also complete the preparation of the local Economic and Community Plan which is a Statutory plan intended to guide all relevant publicly funded activity. The LCDC will consider the community elements of the plan while the Strategic Policy Committee for Enterprise and Economic Development will be responsible for the economic elements. The entire Plan will in due course be considered by both the Municipal Districts and full Council.

While final arrangements have not been made it is expected that the LCDC will become the Local Action Group for the next round of Leader funding. The latest proposals would see the LCDC having a key role in the development of the strategy and oversight of the programme with the existing Local Development Companies continuing to undertake a role in the delivery of the programme.

Economic Development

A clear role was given to local government in the area of economic development under the recent Local Government Reforms. The foregoing paragraphs are part of the economic picture but there are many other areas which are under active consideration and discussion.

Galway County Council is working with Galway City Council on the preparation of an Economic Strategy for Galway with the assistance of the Whittaker Institute in NUIG. Work has advanced over the past few months and the intended outputs at the end of the first phase are an overall background report together with Sectoral Overviews for areas such as Marine, food, retail, internationally traded services, micro-enterprise, renewables and manufacturing.

It is intended that these papers will be considered by the SPC for Enterprise & Economic Development in advance of preparing the Economic Strategy. It is also intended to convene advisory groups representing both the inter-agency and business perspectives to guide the work of the preparation and implementation of the strategy. Overall it is intended that the Strategy will be a document that will help to form a consensus on economic priorities and will contain a number of actions that will guide activity in the coming period. Internally an inter-departmental group is being established to assist in ensuring that all Council activity is permeated by a focus on business and economic development.

The Members will be aware that the County Enterprise Boards were dissolved earlier this year and the Local Enterprise Offices established. The work of the unit has continued including the delivery of a number of new initiatives in areas such as on-line trading, micro-finance and young entrepreneurship. The process of integrating the work of the LEO with the Community and Enterprise and other units in Galway County Council has commenced and it is intended that the staff of the LEO will be accommodated in either County Hall or in Centrepont when the lease on their present accommodation in Woodquay expires in May 2015.

The Galway Airport Site is currently leased for an 11 month period which will allow the undertaking of a review of the future options for the site. This site was purchased as a strategic investment opportunity for the medium to long term economic development of our County. It is likely that the formulation and implementation of a clear strategy with the provision of any necessary financial support will take some time and it is important that short term decisions do not impact negatively on the sites longer term strategic potential.

Galway County Council has been liaising with Galway City Council over the past few months on a proposed bid for European Capital of Culture 2020. It is anticipated that a successful bid must not just focus on the City but on a wider hinterland and in particular the County of Galway. There are two distinct phases to this project with the first being the bid process and if successful the second stage is the further development of the programme which has a substantial funding requirement. No financial commitments have been given to date but it is intended that Galway County Council would support this initiative with the financial input from the County being agreed in due course having regard to the programme of events and to the potential benefit to the County. It is intended that the Members would receive a presentation on this at the November meeting of Council.

Galway County Council has continued to work with DAHG, Udaras and the OPW on the proposed development of a Visitor Centre adjacent to Pearses Cottage in Rosmuc. The project is being facilitated through the Part 8 Planning process which has already been advertised and will be before Council for decision in the near future. Galway County Council are also facilitating the required land acquisition.

The Members received a presentation from Ireland West Airport at their July meeting and Galway County Council has been requested to provide support to the Airport in conjunction with the Local Authorities in Galway City, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo and Donegal. It is intended to bring any proposal in this regard before the Members once all relevant information is available.

Works are continuing on the Conamara Greenway proposal and the Wild Atlantic Way initiative. The first part of the Greenway has been completed at Clifden, the progression of the section between Clifden and Oughterard is being assessed and planning for the section between Galway City and Oughterard is to commence shortly. The programme of works on the Wild Atlantic Way are progressing and are due for completion by 2016. The Galway to Dublin Cycle route is being progressed with the assistance of Galway County Council staff and the project is at route selection stage. It is considered that these projects are very significant for County Galway and have the potential to deliver significant amenity and tourism potential.

The revised Galway County Development Plan which is currently on its final public display period is very cognisant of the need to support job creation and employment opportunities and its capacity to consider sustainable development proposals positively will be kept under review.

It must be recognised that the taking of economic initiatives such as the above and the driving of the economic agenda will require a supporting financial commitment. While there is increased provision in the draft budget to support economic development it remains constrained by resource availability and will need to be increased on a progressive basis over a number of years.

Efficiency

Galway County Council now operates with a budget that has reduced by 33% and a staff complement that has also reduced by approximately 33% since 2008. Despite such significant reductions in resources the business of the Council and the delivery of services have not witnessed an equivalent reduction in output. Much credit must be given to the staff of the Council for the flexibility shown to ensure that services are maintained. Galway County Council has undertaken a number of initiatives in recent years to reduce costs, accrue savings and deliver efficiencies and these efforts continue. In particular the areas of public procurement, energy efficiency and shared services have been pursued with great effect. These initiatives have been in addition to savings achieved under the Croke Park and Haddington Road Agreements.

In 2014 a shared payroll processing unit for all local authorities was established in Laois County Council. Galway County Council was in the second wave of local authorities to transfer to this arrangement and work is ongoing following the substantial transfer of functions in September 2014. Galway County Councils participation in this shared facility will free up staff for other duties. One of the areas that will receive further attention as a result is the area of revenue collection.

Galway County Council will continue to progress energy efficiency projects in public lighting and Council buildings and energy efficiency upgrading to social housing stock working closely with the SEAI and the Tipperary Energy Agency.

Procurement within the public sector in general is migrating towards a more centrally driven model led by the new Office of Government Procurement (OGP). More national frameworks and contracts are now being put in place and all sectors are being encouraged to utilise them in order to generate savings and to improve administrative efficiencies. The opportunities for cost savings based on price alone are diminishing however and therefore savings through other means such as process efficiencies must be examined. By utilising national frameworks and contracts Galway County Council has made savings across a number of categories. Efforts will continue to refine our product coding structure to assist in capturing more accurate analytical data.

General

It should be pointed out that July 2015 marks the end of the period during which staff can retire without further negative impact on their entitlements. While it is not known how many staff may choose to retire early before this date provision has been made in the budget for a number of such retirements. The number of retirements will have budgetary implications arising from increased costs for pensions and gratuities and reduced income from the pension levy.

The recent Local Government Reforms re-confirmed the role of Local Authorities in community development. This will be progressed through a number of the programmes already outlined but a specific initiative that is on-going is the setting up of the Public Participation Network (PPN). The registration process is now complete with a total of 336 groups registered. It is envisaged that the PPN will provide an opportunity for regular and consistent information flows between the Local Authority and the community. The establishment of the PPN will continue over the coming months and into 2015 and Galway County Council will be required to support its operation.

Members will be aware of the Keeping Communities Safe initiative and the ongoing efforts to ensure that our Fire Service meets all of the standards required. The provision of a Fire Station in An Cheathrú Rua requires a specific budget provision but it is anticipated that the implementation of KCS will in time produce savings in other locations together with the pursuit of savings and efficiencies generally within the fire service. In 2015 as part of the implementation of KCS there will be a particular emphasis on Health & Safety in the Fire Service.

The establishment of Irish Water and the transfer of the water services function from local authorities has been one of the single biggest changes in recent years. The activity of Galway County Council in the water services area is now governed by a Service Level Agreement with Irish Water and Annual Service Plans. Work is ongoing at National level on a number of issues but it is expected that these will be largely finalised in 2015.

Significant work has been undertaken in recent years in order to keep our staff and the public safe as we carry out our functions. This has included new procedures, revised processes, investment in dealing with risks and the achievements of OHSAS accreditation for the Housing and Water Services Units. Work is continuing in this regard and the areas of roads and the Fire Service are currently progressing towards accreditation. It is intended that all Units of Galway County Council will have a unified and consistent approach to Health & Safety with the available funding being directed to the areas of greatest need from an organisational perspective. This area needs an ongoing commitment of funding in order to discharge our responsibilities.

The Members will be aware that there are a number of initiatives that are being progressed at National level or on a pilot basis such as the Housing Assistance Payments Scheme and the National Differential Rents Scheme. The detail of how these will impact on Galway County Council and in particular the budgetary implications are not yet clear and I have been unable to make provision for same. It is likely that the implementation process will only progress in the second half of 2015 and it is expected that there will be a phasing arrangement which will mitigate any negative budgetary effects. The main impacts are likely to be an increased staff resource required for HAPS and reduced income as a result of the national differential rents scheme.

The Local Government Auditor has emphasised the need to focus on reducing the deficit of €2m on our current account together with ensuring that there is sufficient provision for rates on vacant properties. The receipt of additional NPPR monies in 2014 has allowed us to ensure that these matters have been stabilised in 2014 and the budget deficit has not increased. This in turn has provided us with the capacity to maintain services in 2015 rather than diverting funding into addressing the deficit.

Unfortunately, due to the limited funds available, I have been unable to make provision in the draft budget for any contingencies which might arise in 2015, for example costs arising from severe weather events or other unexpected incidents.

Roads funding

While the level of resources available for road maintenance and improvement falls short of that which would be desirable, the Council will continue to adapt in an effort to make the best use of allocations. The table below sets out the position in relation to funding in recent years.

In line with previous years, the budget includes a figure for road grants based on the original 2014 allocation as the 2015 allocation has not yet been received.

	Roads Grant Funding	Council's own contribution
	€m	€m
2008	38.90	5.12
2009	35.39	4.09
2010	23.65	3.02

2011	21.80	2.71
2012	20.80	2.60
2013	18.40	2.50
2014	18.50	2.37
2015 (proposed)	18.50	2.33
% reduction from 2008 to 2014	52%	54%

BUDGETARY TREND 2008 – 2015

2008 - Adopted Budget	€160 M
2009 - Adjusted Budget	€146 M
2010 – Adopted Budget	€149 M
2011 – Adopted Budget	€144 M
2012 – Adopted Budget	€136 M
2013 - Adopted Budget	€127M
2014 – Adopted Budget	€122 M
2015 – Draft Budget	€105 M

Local Government Fund

The Local Government Fund has been replaced by the proceeds of the Local Property Tax/Pension Levy which have been estimated to produce income of €14.5m. Given the extent of financial changes including those associated with Irish Water a direct comparison with revenue from the Local Government Fund is no longer meaningful.

Trends in Local Government Fund allocation is as follows: -

	<i>Allocation</i>	<i>% Reduction</i>
2008	€40.60m	
2009	€36.88m	9%
2010	€36.09m	2%

2011	€32.84m	9%
2012	€30.45m	7%
2012 (revised)	€27.67m	3%
2013 (LGF plus pension deduction)	€29.47m	3%
2014 (to include Irish Water and NPPR)	€29.52m	0%

Expenditure proposals

The following tables set out the expenditure and income breakdown proposed for 2014 and 2015:

Expenditure by Programme Group	2014 Budget	2014 Estimated Outturn	2015 Draft Budget
	€	€	€
Housing and Building	11,719,067	11,372,731	11,541,201
Road Transportation & Safety	34,174,335	37,748,849	32,897,196
Water Services	27,101,880	14,270,556	13,119,721
Development Management	7,179,620	8,757,672	7,484,108
Environmental Services	17,112,189	16,902,549	16,930,900
Recreation & Amenity	8,457,060	8,243,768	7,931,728
Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare	8,381,538	9,548,908	4,767,523
Miscellaneous Services	10,652,770	11,780,064	10,605,729
Total	124,778,459	118,625,096	105,278,106

In the Draft Budget, the estimated Revenue Income anticipated is as follows: -

Estimated Revenue Income	2014		2015	
	€	%	€	%
Local Government Fund / LPT	12,506,381	10	12,506,381	12

Pension Related Deduction	2,167,172	2	2,060,000	2
NPPR	145,000	0	350,000	0
State Grants & Subsidies	37,468,305	30	32,674,990	31
Irish Water Income	23,620,428	19	9,262,000	9
Local Determined Income	33,361,594	27	33,336,591	32
Other Income	15,509,579	12	15,088,144	14
	124,778,459		105,278,106	100

Expenditure Adjustments

He detailed the principal variances between the Budget for 2014 and 2015.

Service	Service Description	2015	2014	Change
		€	€	€
Div C	Water Services	13,119,721	27,101,880	(13,982,159)
G05	Educational Support Services	1,975,119	5,438,840	(3,463,721)
	Subtotal of above	15,094,840	32,540,720	(17,445,880)
	Total Expenditure	105,278,106	124,778,459	(19,500,353)

Conclusion

He stated that the preparation of the Draft Annual Budget for 2015 has been challenging. He advised that the proposed Draft Budget will allow Galway County Council to deliver the optimum level of core services in 2015, having regard to available resources. However, he highlighted that there is no provision for contingencies included. While, the proposed gross expenditure of €105.27M together with the capital programme spend estimated at €32M, represents a very considerable investment of monies in the development of the County and the delivery of services throughout the County.

He expressed his gratitude to the elected members for their co-operation and support during 2014. He wished to record his appreciation to the Cathaoirleach Cllr. Mary Hoade, and the former Mayor Cllr. Liam Carroll for their commitment to the special responsibilities of their office and their courtesy and co-operation in doing the business of the Council. He acknowledged the assistance of the Corporate Policy Group in the discussion on the draft budget. He expressed his gratitude to the staff of the Council for their dedication and flexibility during 2014 and in recent years and their support has ensured the continued delivery of services in difficult circumstances. He thanked the Council's Directors of Services and their staff for their rigorous examination of budget items for 2015 to identify areas for efficiency improvement and cost saving. In particular, he acknowledged the work of Mr. Ger Mullarkey, Mr. Michael McGovern, Ms Bernadette O'Connor, Ms. Caitriona Lusby and the staff in the Finance Unit and to thank all involved in delivering the draft budget.

He advised that the year 2015 will undoubtedly bring new challenges for Galway County Council, but is confident that with the support of the Members, Management team, and colleagues the Council will provide valuable services in 2015 to meet the critical needs of the people of Galway. He then recommended the Draft Budget for 2015 to the elected members for adoption.

The Cathaoirleach then proceeded to initiate the debate on the Draft Budget.

There were opinions and concerns expressed, questions asked and clarifications sought by the elected members on the following:

Opinion was expressed that the Council should write to the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government to outline the views of the elected members of the importance of introducing a progressive rates system to replace the existing inequitable and inefficient system. Clarification was sought as to whether the Valuation Office intended to conduct a review of the current valuations on commercial property in the County of Galway. Opinion was expressed that while the Council had not increased its rate for the previous 6 years and the statutory provision concerning the Base Year adjustment prohibited the Council from raising the County Rate for the period of the adjustment-businesses in Ballinasloe town are faced with increases in their rates. It was emphasised that businesses cannot afford an increase in their rates and that some Dublin local authorities had actually decreased their rates by 2%. Concern was expressed at the level of the arrears of rates and the amount of irrecoverable/uncollectable rates as shown on page 135 and whether the methodology used in accordance with the accrual accounting system was correct. Opinion was expressed that the level of irrecoverable rates was rising from year to year and the accounting method used indicates that the rates liability for the current year is €26 million when the realistic figure was less. In 2014 the Council adopted a figure of €2.6 million for irrecoverable rates but the estimated outturn is €4.4 million and the estimated figure for 2015 is €3 million. Concern was expressed that the total amount of arrears is €10 million at present and is set to increase. Opinion was expressed that this distorts the Budget as it comes back as a charge against the account each year-the Council should therefore adopt a realistic rate it can collect each year and therefore it should reduce the current rate to make this feasible. It was suggested that 10% of the commercial rate payers are paying 90% of the rates and that 90% are paying 10% of the rates.

A recommendation was made that a Finance Committee of elected members be established to be pro-active as regards the collection of outstanding income-they should be provided with the details of all rate liabilities due to the Council. Opinion was expressed that the €2 million collected as a result of the NPPR charge in 2014 was been used to fund the charge on irrecoverable rates-it was suggested that this should have been used to fund the enhancement of the towns & villages. Clarification was sought on what effect an increase/decrease in rates would have on the 10 year adjustment period. Concern was expressed at the fact that the estimated level of income of €12.5 million shown on page 107 to be derived from 80% of the proceeds of the Local Property Tax appertaining to Co Galway in 2015 was replacing the income previously derived from the Local Government Fund. In effect –this level of income was being removed from the funding of the Council by the abolition of the Local Government Fund. It was a fallacy to suggest that the introduction of the LPT would result in the increase in the provision of services by local authorities-as the constant decrease in funding levels from Government grants and the high level of income arrears was forcing the Council into an un-tenable position. Clarification was sought in regard to the reduction in the level of income to be derived from Irish Water as indicated on pages 11 & 12 and whether the Council will derive income from rates on the valuation of Irish Water's infrastructure in the future. Opinion was expressed that there were 38 water/wastewater treatment plants in the County and whether the Council had set a rate for Irish Water. Opinion was expressed that the abolition of domestic rates in 1977 had a detrimental effect on the country's finances.

Clarification was sought as to why the discretionary budgets for each of the 5 municipal districts was different as they should be the same and the full discretionary budget should have been presented to each Municipal District. Concern was expressed that the funding of the Municipal District of Athenry-Oranmore was inadequate and the apportionment of the discretionary budget should have taken into account the population, number of houses and the volume of traffic (not just per km of road) of each Municipal District. Opinion was expressed that Athenry-Oranmore had received just 8% or €2.2 million of this indicative budget of €24.8 million even though it has 19% of the population and other Municipal Districts had received more and consequently the Municipal District of Athenry-Oranmore had rejected the draft Discretionary Municipal District budget. Concern was expressed that the Municipal District budget for Ballinasloe was distorted by the fact that it included the budget for the former Ballinasloe Town Council which created an imbalance and that this should have been presented separately to the Municipal District. Clarification was sought as to whether this method of presenting the draft budget for the Municipal District of Ballinasloe was in accordance with the statutory requirement for the transition period. Clarification was sought as to whether the Council would have a budget deficit or surplus at the end of 2014. Concern was expressed in regard to the operation of the central procurement unit page 63 and the fact that the Council is purchasing a lot of goods and services from outside the County. Opinion was expressed that this is a dis-service to the Council's ratepayers as it is not procuring business from them and it should adopt a policy of local purchasing.

The provision of €264,000 on page 124 for the taking over of unfinished housing estates was noted but opinion was expressed that this was not sufficient. Opinion was expressed that since Irish Water was established –the Council had not taken over any unfinished estates and clarification was sought in regard to the situation with water connections. Opinion was expressed that the Council had an important role in economic development as outlined by the reforms detailed on page 5 and it was anticipated that these would have a positive impact.

Progress on the development of the Conamara Greenway, the Wild Atlantic Way initiative and the proposed development of a Visitor Center adjacent to Pearse's Cottage at Rosmuc were welcomed. Opinion was expressed that the timeframe for the development at Pearse's Cottage which is significant to the 1916 commemoration was tight and whether the Part 8 Planning process would be presented to the Council at the December meeting and if a CPO was required for the land.

The Council was requested to write to the Department in regard to the provision of toilet facilities at the car parks being provided for the Wild Atlantic Way. Opinion was expressed that consultations with the landowners in regard to the Galway-Dublin Cycle/Walk route should be progressed as there is a significant economic benefit to such tourism infrastructure as indicated by the number of visitors using the Greenway in Mayo. Concern was expressed that the elected members were not informed of the proposed level of funding for Ireland West Airport and that this should not compromise the future of the Galway Airport Site. The provision of €350,000 for economic development & promotion was welcomed as necessary to promote business activity in the County. Clarification was sought as to the time frame for the establishment of the SPC for economic development. The provision of fibre broadband for businesses in Loughrea was welcomed and opinion was expressed that enterprise centres were required in each town to provide office space for businesses. Clarification was sought in regard to the Council's plans for the 1916 commemoration.

Concern was expressed at how the abolition of the LIS schemes have a detrimental effect on local communities and it was noted that there may be changes to the criteria for CIS schemes in 2015. It was proposed that the Council continue to allocate 15% of the Discretionary Maintenance Grant amounting to €750,000 to fund necessary works on the tertiary road network in lieu of the LIS funding. Works were undertaken on 52 such roads in 2014. It was also proposed that the Council create a fund of €500,00 in regard to undertaking improvement works such as traffic management initiatives/ repair of footpaths etc for the towns and villages. It was suggested that projects could be undertaken on 2 such towns and villages from each MD over a 5 year period. This could be funded from the Discretionary Maintenance Grant and contributions from the NOM. Opinion was expressed that the provision of Notice of Motion money be set at at least €18,500 and some elected members requested that this be increased to €20,000 for each of the 39 Councillors. Clarification was sought as to whether the Council could provide additional public lighting from the budget. Opinion was expressed that the Council should provide public lighting outside every national school. Opinion was expressed that the Council should provide a breakdown of the maintenance budget for each town and village and that a submission be made to the Department requesting more funding for regional roads. Opinion was expressed that the Roads & Transportation SPC originally scheduled to be established in November but it now appears that it will not be set up until 2015. Concern was expressed at the significant reduction in road grants over the past few years. Concern was expressed at the reduction in the number of outdoor staff by 50% and the resultant increase in the age profile due to the embargo on staff recruitment and its effect on front line services. A proposal was made that the N65 be included on the National Roads Program for 2015. Opinion was expressed that the issue of parking in the towns will have to be addressed as parking charges are having a negative effect on business-clarification was sought as to whether companies which setup outside towns were contributions for parking. Opinion was expressed that the Council provide a number of days free parking per week during Christmas as an incentive for businesses. Clarification was sought in regard to the requirement for improvement

works/public lighting at the junction of Labane village with the N18 and the need for the Council to raise the matter with the NRA. Opinion was expressed at the condition of a number of bad bends near Letterfrack on the N59 Clifden-Westport road. Opinion was expressed that the Council should undertake a survey of private non-Council roads. Clarification was sought in regard to the level of funding for the N83 Forty Acres in 2015. Opinion was expressed that the OPW had undertaken some good measures on the mitigation of potential flooding. Opinion was expressed that in regard to the list of Marine works on page 21 that a lot of piers in south Galway require repair as well. Clarification was sought in regard to the requirement for a link road to be constructed at the N66 from Coscarrig to the old N6 at Hanley's cross, Loughrea –a corridor has been reserved for this during the past 7-8 years-as there are significant tailbacks at the N66 approach road to Loughrea. The Council was requested to raise the matter with the NRA. The funding of traffic calming measures for Oranmore was welcomed. Clarification was sought whether the Council could provide sandbags for each Municipal District in the event of extreme weather during the winter and over the Christmas period. Concern was expressed at the reduction of €1.5 million in roads funding in 2014. Concern was expressed at approach to addressing drains located on private property filled with rocks/stones /debris –much of which originated from marine property as a result of the storms last December & January- funding is required for works to clear drains and culverts in the vicinity of the sea. Concern was expressed at the revision by the NRA of the Safety Improvement works proposed for the R446 at Ballyeighter, Ballinasloe North. Clarification was sought as to whether the Council could contribute funding towards the replacement of the existing bridge over the River Suck at Derrycabill by a steel bridge- it was noted that Roscommon County Council provided an allocation of €50,000. Concern was expressed that there was no provision in the budget for contingencies such as severe weather. Clarification was sought as to whether the Council was in a position to provide footpaths in Tuam toward the Toghermore Centre. Opinion was expressed that more funding should be provided for the provision of new playgrounds in the County. Clarification was sought in regard to mitigation of flooding measures for Portumna in 2015 in accordance with the Jacob's report. Clarification was sought in regard to improvement works required for Killimor and the Woodpark Estate. Concern was expressed at lack of progress in regard to undertaking the necessary improvements required to the road at Mhuinteach, Claregalway- it was stated that the OPW recognised that this road should be raised. Clarification was requested in regard to the Council's position in regard to the repair of storm damage to Gurteen Bay & Dog's Bay. Concern was expressed at the abolition of some drainage committees which were crucial to flood alleviation measures and the reduction in funding for drainage .

Clarification was sought in regard to the provision of a new Fire Station at Carraroe (An Cheathrú Rua) and whether agreement was secured with Udarás na Gaeltachta on the lease of a suitable building. Details on the procurement of a fire engine and the recruitment/training of staff were also requested. Opinion was expressed in regard to the important service being undertaken by Galway Mountain Rescue on a voluntary basis and it was proposed that the Council provide a grant of €10,000 to them in 2015 which is similar to that provided in 2014. It was stated that this voluntary service should be funded on a national basis. Concern was expressed in regard to the funding of Coroner's Fees H0501 page 135 and at the low rate of fees that are paid to undertakers for their service and opinion was expressed that this matter should be reviewed. Clarification was sought as to whether the Council could put up screening if the owners of property on the Derelict Sites Register are unable to fund the cost of repairs. Opinion was expressed that a review of the Casual Trading Bye-Laws should be implemented with a view to supporting economic development. Opinion was expressed that the level of grants being

paid to communities in regard to the maintenance of Burial Grounds was insufficient. Concern was expressed that the responsibility for the purchase of land required for Burial Ground extensions was left to the local communities. Clarification was sought in regard to the current arrangement to utilise FAS/CES schemes in regard to Burial Ground works. Opinion was expressed that there was a need to increase the amount of Community Grants available concern was expressed at the level of funding for the Arts Program. Clarification was sought as to whether there was funding provided for Ballinasloe Fair and other festival activity such as Crinniú na mBád and the Yeats Ballylee. Concern was expressed that there was no real reform as outlined in the document "Putting People First" and that the Budget was a reflection of this.

Concern was expressed that there are 4,000 people on the Housing waiting list and that the Government would need to provide more funding to address the issue. Opinion was expressed that there would be a crisis in the Housing situation in 2015. It was noted that the Government would provide details of its €2.2 billion Social Housing Strategy within a week. Clarification was sought as to whether tenants can avail of Tenant Purchase Schemes and what type of Housing loans would be available in 2015. Clarification was sought as to whether the Council had setup the Housing Disability Committee. Clarification was sought in regard to the works on 12 Housing units at Dunloe Hill, Ballinasloe in 2015 as indicated on page 102 and the 13 units at Letterfrack. Concern was expressed that 52 out of the 54 private rental properties inspected by the Council failed to meet the required standards and opinion was expressed that it should increase the number of inspections to compel private landlords to improve the quality of rental accommodation. Concern was expressed at the reduction in the level of funding of the maintenance of the Council's Housing stock in 2015 as indicated on page 116.

The Cathaoirleach paid tribute to the management and the staff of the Council for the efficient services provided and acknowledged that fact that there was a major decline in staff numbers especially front line outdoor staff due to retirements and the age profile would also be a contributory factor. She advised that the new economic development initiatives should get the full support of the Council and that it should provide support to regional bodies such as Ireland West Airport. She stated that the Galway Mountain Rescue voluntary body were providing a great service which should receive national funding. She then requested the Directors to respond to the Councillors' queries.

Mr. Mullarkey, advised that changes to the current legislation governing the levying of commercial rates was a matter for National Government and he was aware that a new Bill on Valuations was currently before the Seanad. He advised that he was not aware of the timeframe as to when the Valuation Office can conduct a general review of the valuation of commercial property in Galway as this largely depended on the staff and other resources available to the Valuation Office. He explained that in the case of rate arrears the Council had a policy of securing agreements with businesses with trading difficulties to pay by instalment payment plans rather than implementing the terms of Court decrees secured against them as this was not in the interest of the Council if it forced them out of business. He advised that it is the Council's policy to pursue those ratepayers who would not co-operate through the courts. He stated that that arrears of rates/irrecoverable rates resulted from an increase in the number of vacant premises and businesses with trading difficulties or who are in liquidation. He explained that the Valuation Office still issue warrants for business premises even though they may be vacant and that a sizeable amount of arrears relating to business liquidations are retained on the account until such time as the appropriate legal documentation is produced. He advised that commercial

rates is collected in 2 moities and demands are issued in March & July each year-it is a feature of the system that over 70% of the rates are paid in the last 3 months of the year. He anticipated that with the pickup in the economy that more debtors would be in a better position to tackle their arrears. He explained that the Council had to make provision in the Budget for bad debts. He advised that he will examine the arrears position at the end of 2014 and strike off some of the irrecoverable rates. In regard to the proposal that the Council should adopt a lower and more realistic rate of €61.03 instead of €66.59 he explained that this was not possible because the net effect would be a large increase in the deficit. He advised that if the Council adopted a rate of €66.59 today it would enable it to bridge the gap and merge the rate with the former BTC area within 10 years. He then explained that the reason why the allocations on the draft discretionary budgets for the 5 Municipal Districts were different was due to the expenditure profile on the relevant codes in the past- he advised that he will review the situation and adjust the figures next year. In regard to the query concerning the distortion caused to the Municipal District budget due to the requirements of the former Ballinasloe Town Council area- he advised that this was compiled in accordance with the statutory requirement for the transition period and Ballinasloe Town Council cannot be treated as a separate authority for 2015. In regard to the concerns raised regarding procurement policy and local purchasing of goods and services – he advised that the Council was required to implement statutory guidelines issued by the Government Procurement Agency. Responding to the concern expressed that there was a reduction in funding for the Housing Maintenance budget-he advised that this was due to the retirement of Housing Maintenance staff who would not be replaced. In response to the query regarding the Council's financial position at the end of 2014-he advised that the receipt of over €2 million from the NPPR had helped to stabilise the deficit position and he anticipated a break even outcome or a small surplus. Responding to the concern that funding of drainage works was declining –he advised that the Council agree a program of works with the OPW. He confirmed that there is provision in the Budget to support Ballinasloe Fair and other festivals.

Mr. Gavin addressed the issues concerning roads. He was in favour of the proposal to maintain at least 15% of the Discretionary Maintenance Grant estimated to amount to approx €750,000 in 2015 to fund necessary works on the tertiary road network in lieu of the former LIS funding. He advised that he would examine the proposal to create a fund of €500,000 to undertake improvement works to at least 2 towns & villages in each Municipal District for the next 5 years. Details of this together with funding of the NOM and a breakdown of the maintenance budget for the towns & villages will be provided as part of the Roads Programme to be presented to the Council in early 2015. He advised that there is no funding provided for additional public lighting for 2015 as the current budget is provided to meet the requirements of operation and maintenance (Electric Skyline) of the current network. In regard to the reduction of outdoor staff numbers- he advised that the Council was utilising a flexible arrangement as regards hiring temporary seasonal workers in addition to contract staff. In regard to the issues raised concerning parking-he advised that that finalisation of parking charges for the Christmas will be agreed at the next Council meeting and that the issue of parking charges is being considered and that a report will be presented to allow for consideration of the issue by the Roads, Transportation & Marine Strategic Policy Committee. In regard to the Labane/N18 junction he advised that the Council had raised the matter with the NRA. In regard to the bad bends on the N59 Clifden-Westport road he advised that the matter was being discussed with the NRA. In regard to a proposed survey of private roads he advised that the extent of funding currently being provided for local roads was insufficient in regard to consideration of non-council roads. He confirmed that the Council will proceed with the re-alignment of the N83 Tuam –Dunmore at

Forty Acres in 2015 should funding be secured from the NRA. In regard to the piers at South Galway he advised that the Council had undertaken a survey of all the piers and will seek funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine based on priority. In regard to the provision of a link road at the N66 Hanley's Cross he advised that no further allocations have been received from the NRA and he will raise the matter with them again. He advised that in regard to the provision of sandbags to each Municipal District in regard to extreme weather that the Council will distribute them as required in accordance with the Winter Service Plan. In regard to the reduction of €1.5 million allocation for roads from 2013 to 2014 he stated that the Council continues to seek maximum funding from the Department of Transport and the NRA. In response to the query regarding the blockage of drains on private property as a result of the winter storms-he stated that the Council will examine strategic drains and will undertake any essential work relating to road clearance and safety. In response to the query on the R446 at Ballyeigher he advised that works have been undertaken to improve the safe turning movement at the junction and the Council was required to engage with the NRA in regard to the provision of safety works. In response to the request for the Council to provide matching funding to replace the bridge over the River Suck at Derrycabill-he advised that the bridge on the Galway side of the river is located on private property and therefore it is not the responsibility of the Council but the landowners. In response to the query that there was no provision in the budget for contingencies-he advised that the Council have a Winter Service Plan with funding in place for gritting and routine response. In response to the query regarding the provision of footpaths from Tuam to the Toghermore Center-he stated that there was no funding for this in 2014 and 2015. In response to the concern regarding measures to mitigate flooding at Portumna in accordance with the Jacob's Report -he advised that the Shannon CFRAMS will take into account the flooding that occurred at Portumna and will make proposals. In regard to the improvement works required for Killimor and the Woodpark Estate- he stated that there are no proposals at present due to lack of funding but could be considered under the €500,000 fund proposed to be established in regard to improvement works on 2 towns & villages in each Municipal District. In regard to the concern expressed at the lack of progress on the essential works required for the road at Mhuinteach, Claregalway he advised that the Council will examine the situation. Regarding the query on the storm damage repair of Gurteen Bay and Dog's Bay- he advised that the Council will examine this to ascertain the division between public and private property. In regard to the concern expressed at the abolition of the River Suck & River Fergus Joint Drainage Committees and the reduction in funding for drainage measures- he stated that the Council has provided the same level of funding for 2015 and that it will liaise with Roscommon County Council in regard to drainage works on the River Suck basin.

Mr. Gavican advised that a lease arrangement has been agreed with Udarás na Gaeltachta in regard to a suitable building for the proposed new Fire Station at Carraroe (An Cheathrú Rua) and the Council was utilising the procurement process in regard to securing a Fire appliance and other required equipment. Responding to the queries raised in regard to the Housing waiting list, future Tenant Purchase Scheme and the type of Housing loans that will be available in 2015 -he advised that the Government would unveil its new Social Housing Strategy next week and that the Strategy would provide additional clarity on these matters. He confirmed that arrangements were being advanced for the inaugural meeting of the Housing Disability Committee. He advised that the current requirement for Social Housing is dealt with by means of the Rental Accommodation Scheme, Voluntary Housing Agencies and from the Council's Housing stock. In response to the concern that a substantial number of private rental properties had failed to meet the required standards-he stated that the Council will continue to implement

inspection measures in regard to private rented housing stock. Responding to the concern at the level of fees paid relating to the Coroners Service –he advised that the majority of payments were based on guidelines issued by the Department and that payments to undertakers was based on a schedule of agreed rates with discretion for undertakers to opt in or opt out of providing services to the Coroner at any time.

Mr. Cullen advised that a decision on whether utilities held by Irish Water would be liable for commercial rates was a decision for Government and was not within the discretion of Galway County Council. He advised that should a decision be made that such utilities were not liable for commercial rates it would have no impact on the draft budget as presented, as it did not allow for the levying of rates on such utilities. In regard to the query on the provision of screening by the Council for Derelict Sites –he advised that it was the Council’s policy to intervene where the situation was considered dangerous and to try to recoup costs. In regard to Burial Ground maintenance he agreed that the level of funding paid to local committees was low but the Council would continue to pay the grants as it relied on the assistance of each local community. He stated that he would consider replacing the payment of the flat rate grant to committees with one based on merit. In response to the query on water connections-he advised that the fees that the Council charges still apply until they will be replaced at a later date by the Irish Water fees.

Ms. McConnell confirmed that the Part 8 Planning process in regard to the proposed Visitor’s Center at Pearse’s Cottage, Rosmuc was on public display until the 24-11-2014 and she anticipated that the matter would be brought before the Council at the December or January meeting. In response to the query regarding the taking in charge of unfinished Housing Estates – she advised that the Council will proceed with the process once Irish Water have signed off on its requirements. She explained the SPC for Economic Development will be established once the nomination/election process is completed through the Public Participation Network.

The Chief Executive provided clarification in regard to several matters raised. He confirmed that the Council has a small budget and a programme in regard to preparations for the 1916 Commemoration. He acknowledged that the situation in regard to rates on vacant properties does require attention and outlined the stabilising effect of the receipts from the NPPR charge on the deficit. He stated that the use of this funding in this way was not an ideal situation –but the Council was striving to maintain services in 2015 at the current level. He advised that the Council intended to deploy additional resources to the collection of income in 2015. He stated that a decision on the embargo on recruitment was a matter for the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government but that should the embargo be lifted it was necessary to ensure that appropriate financial resources were available to meet any additional payroll costs arising from any increase in staff numbers.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Chief Executive and the Directors for their contribution and then requested the elected members to submit any proposals on the draft Budget.

PROPOSALS TO AMEND THE DRAFT BUDGET

It was proposed by Cllr Michael Maher, seconded by Cllr Tom Mc Hugh and agreed to amend the draft budget for 2015 as follows:

‘In 2014 the Department of Transport allowed local authorities to use up to 15% of the Discretionary Non-National Roads Grant as a contribution to the Local Improvement Scheme program. This amounted to €720,000 and the Council members agreed to defer this allocation to the L.I.S projects and allowed the funding to go forward towards addressing Local Tertiary or stop end roads. As a result 52 stop end roads were done across the County and the allocation was rounded up to €750,000 by the Council. I propose that we continue to allocate 15% of the annual Discretionary Non-National Grant which will allow us continue works across the County for 2015.’

It was proposed by Cllr. Maher, seconded by Cllr. T. Mc Hugh and agreed to amend the draft budget for 2015 as follows:

‘That an allocation of €500,000 be put in place by the Council to undertake projects on a pro-rata basis in each of the 5 Municipal Authorities for a 5 year period and I recommend that we allocate a % of the annual Non-National Roads allocation which may be able to attract additional funding from Smarter Travel, Irish Water and various other agencies which will allow projects such as the Kinvara Road & Footpath improvements, Oranmore Traffic Calming measures, Killimor Footpath & Village improvements, projects in Ballinasloe, Connemara and various other initiatives throughout the 5 Municipal Authorities which can not presently go ahead as there is no funding mechanism in place to deliver any such projects.’

It was proposed by Cllr. Rabbitte, seconded by Cllr. Donnellan and agreed

‘the lifting of the embargo on the outdoor staff. Since 2008 we have lost over 50% of the staff . I would like to see this restored as in parts of Galway County we have Council outdoor staff still providing out of hours emergency services at only week on week off basis. I would like this restored to a 100% call out service’.

It was proposed by Cllr. Rabbitte, seconded by Cllr. Donnellan and agreed

‘that the N65 be included on the on the National Roads Program for 2015. I welcome the program of pavement, lighting and minor improvement works to be undertaken on the National Primary & National Secondary Road network and I would like to see Killimor Village & the Woodpark Estate on the N65 be included.’

It was proposed by Cllr. Rabbitte, seconded by Cllr. G. Finnerty and agreed

‘that Galway County Council seek rate clarification from the Rates Valuation Office . On receipt of this information, I wish to propose that Galway County Council then apply the rate to Irish Water and subsequently collect the rates from the 38 Water Treatment Plants & the 30 Sewage Treatment Plants and all funds collected be spent by the Council on various projects from Amenity, Recreation, Education and Health & Welfare within the County.’

It was proposed by Cllr. Healy, seconded by Cllr. D. Connolly and agreed

‘That Galway County Council recognises the difficulties that a non-progressive rates system causes for rate payers. In recognising this –the Council calls on the Department of the Environment to make the provision of a progressive rates system a priority for 2015.’

It was proposed by Cllr. Cuddy, seconded by Cllr. Charity ‘that no action of this Council should in any way put an obstacle in the way of aviation activities at Carnmore.’

Following discussion it was agreed to defer consideration of the motion to the November meeting of Plenary Council.

It was proposed by Cllr. Welby, seconded by Cllr. Broderick to ‘allow all members to carry forward any unspent training and conference from 2014 to 2015.’

Following discussion it was agreed to defer consideration of the motion to the November meeting of Plenary Council.

It was proposed by Cllr. J. Byrne, seconded by Cllr. Fahy ‘that the following be included: Budget for promotion of Arts Programme e.g. Cruinniu na mBad Kinvara, Cooley Collins Festival Gort. Budget for special grant to Yeats Thoor Ballylee Society to celebrate 150th anniversary of birth of WB Yeats in 2015. Budget be allocated for mandatory safety measures at Piers in Kinvara and Ballinderreen Parishes. Budget to be included for provision of slipway at Parkmore Harbour, Kinvara, Sailing Club has now 160 members and this is a necessary requirement. That Galway County Council establish from the Department, the extent of funding that will be allocated from recent €2.2 billion social housing fund. That Galway County Council prioritise and maintain efforts with OPW to continue minor works programme to alleviate flooding in South Galway.’

Following discussion leave was unanimously granted for the motion to be withdrawn at the request of Cllr. J. Byrne.

It was proposed by Cllr. Cuddy, seconded by Cllr. Charity ‘that the Municipal allocation for the Athenry-Oranmore area be increased to €5,016,000 to reflect the fact that the Municipal District represents 19% of the population.’

The Cathaoirleach ruled that the motion as presented was not in order and accordingly the motion was not put to the meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr. Cuddy, seconded by Cllr. Welby and agreed ‘that Galway County Council allocate the sum of €10,000 towards the Galway Mountain Rescue Service to match what has already been allocated by Galway City Council.’

It was proposed by Cllr. M. Connolly, seconded by Cllr. McClearn and agreed ‘to allocate €10,000 to the Galway Mountain Rescue Service in 2015 from the Community Grants Code and to highlight that funding in future years may not be possible.’

It was proposed by Cllr. M. Connolly, seconded by Cllr. McClearn and agreed 'that Galway County Council apply to the Department of Transport requesting additional funding of €200,000 for road improvement works throughout the county.'

It was proposed by Cllr. Kinane, seconded by Cllr. Noone and agreed 'that if extra funding is granted/obtained from central government that traffic volumes be included as part of the criteria for allocation.'

It was proposed by Cllr. M. Connolly, seconded by Cllr. McClearn and agreed 'for an allocation of €50,000 to be included in the Economic Development provision to provide support to Ireland West Airport in conjunction with the Local Authorities in Galway City, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo & Donegal. It is also requested to bring any proposal in this regard before the members once all relevant information is available.'

It was proposed by Cllr. Cuddy, seconded by Cllr. Charity 'that the NOM allowance for each member be increased to €20,000.'

As the motion was not agreed, the Cathaoirleach called for a vote on the Motion and the following was the result of the vote:

For: Cllrs. Broderick, Canney, Charity, D. Connolly, Comh. Ó Cualáin, Cllrs. Cuddy, Cuncliffe, Comh. Ó Curraoin, Cllrs. Healy, K. McHugh & Welby **[11]**

Against: Cllrs. Burke, J. Byrne, N. Byrne, M. Connolly, Donnellan, Donohue, Fahy, Feeney, G. Finnerty, M. Finnerty, Hoade, Hynes, Kearney, Keaveney, Killilea, Kinane, Maher, Mannion, McClearn, T. McHugh, Noone, Rabbitte, Roche, Thomas, Comh. Ó Tuairisg & Cllr. Walsh **[26]**

As a result of the vote, the Cathaoirleach declared the motion defeated.

It was proposed by Cllr. M. Connolly, seconded by Cllr. McClearn and agreed 'that the current allocation of NOM monies for the 39 Councillors be maintained at €18,500 as in previous years.'

It was proposed by Cllr. Cuncliffe, seconded by Cllr. Charity 'that the Council only recognizes rates in the Budget for 2015 that are collectable. Each year, on average since 2011 an extra €2 million is being included as income which will never be collected and the Council proposes to do it again this year. We estimate that our rates arrears will be €12 million at the end of 2015. I propose that we deduct €2 million from the rates expected for 2015 and agree a plan to write off the €12 million uncollectable rates. I am totally opposed to increasing rates or Local Property Tax to deal with this accumulated bad debt in regard to rates.'

As the motion was not agreed, the Cathaoirleach called for a vote on the Motion and the following was the result of the vote:

For: Cllrs. Broderick, Charity, D. Connolly, Comh. Ó Cualáin, Cllrs. Cuddy, Cunniffe, Comh. Ó Curraoin, Cllrs. Healy, K. McHugh & Welby [10]

Against: Cllrs. Burke, J. Byrne, N. Byrne, Canney, M. Connolly, Donnellan, Donohue, Fahy, Feeney, G. Finnerty, M. Finnerty, Hoade, Hynes, Kearney, Keaveney, Killilea, Kinane, Maher, Mannion, McClearn, T. McHugh, Noone, Rabbitte, Roche, Thomas, Comh. Ó Tuairisg & Cllr. Walsh [27]

As a result of the vote, the Cathaoirleach declared the motion defeated.

It was proposed by Cllr. Welby, seconded by Cllr. Broderick 'that Galway County Council reduce refunds of irrecoverable rates from €3 million to €1 million in light of the assessment that the economy is recovering. We propose to set a County Rate of €61.03 and a Ballinasloe Rate of €52.00.'

As the motion was not agreed, the Cathaoirleach called for a vote on the Motion and the following was the result of the vote:

For: Cllrs. Broderick, Canney, D. Connolly, Comh. Ó Cualáin, Cllrs. Cuddy, Cunniffe, Comh. Ó Curraoin, Cllrs. Healy, K. McHugh & Welby [10]

Against: Cllrs. Burke, J. Byrne, N. Byrne, M. Connolly, Donnellan, Donohue, Fahy, Feeney, G. Finnerty, M. Finnerty, Hoade, Hynes, Kearney, Keaveney, Killilea, Kinane, Maher, Mannion, McClearn, T. McHugh, Noone, Rabbitte, Roche, Thomas, Comh. Ó Tuairisg & Cllr. Walsh [26]

Abstained: Cllr. Charity [1]

As a result of the vote, the Cathaoirleach declared the motion defeated.

It was proposed by Cllr. Canney, seconded by Cllr. Charity 'that on Page 136 Item H0902 be reduced by €30,000 and that Page 130 that F0401 be increased by €30,000.'

As the motion was not agreed, the Cathaoirleach called for a vote on the Motion and the following was the result of the vote:

For: Cllrs. Broderick, Canney, Charity, D. Connolly, Comh. Ó Cualáin, Cllr. Cunniffe, Comh. Ó Curraoin, Cllrs. Healy, K. McHugh & Welby [10]

Against: Cllrs. Burke, J. Byrne, N. Byrne, M. Connolly, Donnellan, Donohue, Fahy, Feeney, G. Finnerty, M. Finnerty, Hoade, Hynes, Kearney, Keaveney, Killilea, Kinane, Maher, Mannion, McClearn,

T. McHugh, Noone, Rabbitte, Roche, Thomas, Comh. Ó Tuairisg & Cllr. Walsh [26]

Abstained: Cllr. Cuddy [1]

As a result of the vote, the Cathaoirleach declared the motion defeated.

It was proposed by Cllr. J. McClearn, seconded by Cllr. M. Connolly and agreed to amend the draft budget for 2015 as follows:

1. Code D1101 Heritage Services (Page 125) –to increase the funding by €5,000
2. Code F0204 Purchase of Books/CDs (Page 130)-to increase funding by €20,000
3. Code F0401 Community Grants (Page 130) –to increase funding by €20,000
4. Code E0901 Maintenance of Burial Grounds (Page 128)-to increase funding by €10,000.

To balance the Budget the following reductions were proposed.

1. Code B0601 Traffic Management (Page 120) –reduce funding by €10,000
2. Code D0101 Statutory Plans & Policy (Page 124)-reduce funding by €10,000
3. Code D0201 Planning Control (Page 124) –reduce funding by €5,000
4. Code E1101 Operation of Fire Service (Page 128) –reduce funding by €20,000
5. Code E0503 Environmental Awareness Services (Page 127)-reduce funding by €10,000.

PROPOSAL TO ADOPT THE BUDGET FOR 2015, AS AMENDED

1909

It was proposed by Cllr. Maher, seconded by Cllr. T. McHugh to adopt the Budget for 2015, as amended.

As the motion was not agreed, the Cathaoirleach called for a vote on the Motion and the following was the result of the vote:

For: Cllrs. Burke, J. Byrne, N. Byrne, M. Connolly, Donnellan, Donohue, Fahy, Feeney, G. Finnerty, M. Finnerty, Hoade, Hynes, Kearney, Keaveney, Killilea, Kinane, Maher, Mannion, McClearn, T. McHugh, Noone, Rabbitte, Roche, Thomas, Comh. Ó Tuairisg & Cllr. Walsh [26]

Against: Cllrs. Broderick, Canney, Charity, D. Connolly, Comh. Ó Cualáin, Cllrs. Cuddy, Cunniffe, Comh. Ó Curraoin, Cllrs. Healy, K. McHugh & Welby [11]

As a result of the vote, the Cathaoirleach declared the motion carried.

**DETERMINATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BUDGET ADOPTED OF THE RATE ON VALUATION
TO BE LEVIED FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2015** **1910**

It was proposed by Cllr. T. McHugh, seconded by Cllr. M. Connolly and agreed “that Galway County Council hereby determine in accordance with the Budget adopted, the rate on valuation to be levied for the financial year ending 31st of December 2015”.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE ESTIMATED OUTTURNS 2014 **1911**

It was proposed by Cllr. McClearn, seconded by Cllr. G. Finnerty and agreed to note the estimated expenditure and income outturn for 2014.

TO NOTE THE REPORT ON THE THREE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME **1912**

It was proposed by Cllr. T. McHugh, seconded by Cllr. Feeney and agreed to note the report on the three year capital programme.

TO NOTE THE PROGRESS ON THE CORPORATE PLAN **1913**

It was proposed by Cllr. T. McHugh, seconded by Cllr. Feeney and agreed to note the progress report on the Corporate Plan.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Council Management and staff and the elected members for their contributions to the 2015 Budget.

Chriochnaigh an Cruinniú ansin