

MINUTES

COMERAGH DISTRICT GMA MEETING

DÚICHE AN CHUMARAIGH

**HELD ON 19TH OCTOBER 2022 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES,
DUNGARVAN**

PRESENT:

Cllr. Liam Brazil, Cathaoirleach
Cllr. John O’Leary
Cllr. Seanie Power
Cllr. Ger Barron
Cllr. Declan Clune

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Ivan Grimes, Director of Services Housing, Community & Emergency Services
Mr. Bernard Pollard, Head of Finance
Ms. Honor Dunphy, Meetings Administrator

B. Pollard, HoF, outlined details as presented in the budget overview noting that it identifies the discretionary budget for the district. Within the service levels identified €7.4m as discretionary of which €1.071m is being allocated to Comeragh which equates to 14.4% as against a population of 16.6% of the County.

Cllr. Barron noted small budget for festivals and events in comparison to the rest of the County, noting important festivals for the district such as Comeragh Wild festival and Waterford Food festival. Also outlined zero allocation for cleansing.

Cllr. Power enquired about difference on roads budget in comparison to 2021.

B. Pollard, HoF, outlined that figure for roads remained the same as previous year.

Cllr. O’Leary enquired if the roads included budgets from LIS/CIS and asked if it could be broken down per district for each of the schemes as is not a true reflection of what is being spent in the district.

B. Pollard, HoF, confirmed that last year’s roads allocation was €651k compared to €650k in 2021, street cleaning is included in the local road’s general maintenance budget area, what is presented here is the discretionary element of which there is none for cleansing. Could break out costs for overall roads budget but this process is looking purely at discretionary costs. From Comeragh perspective budget accounts for 32% of the budget for local road maintenance which is due to the density of roads compared to population.

Cllr. Power outlined that roads maintenance is important as to the impact on the district and with increased costs this year the budget will not be enough to result in the same level of work being carried out and won’t go as far.

B. Pollard, HoF, noted that discussing this process before we deal with the overall budget and figures as presented are based on 2021 figures and are only to illustrate how the discretionary budget is spent.

Unfortunately, this is the schedule as outlined by the department and legislation and the timing of the meetings are set by legislation and should be carried out after the main budget, but it is an opportunity to discuss the issues.

Cllr. O'Leary noted that the district expects and hopes that the expenditure for roads would be kept at the rate of inflation and if doesn't keep pace won't result in adequate works being carried out.

Cllr. Barron accepts the population issue but noted that Comeragh area has more roads than other areas.

Cathaoirleach noted that more distance in roads in the Comeragh area, during the winter roads will take a battering and need to have an increase in the budget and need to reconsider the amount allocated. Asked for length of road compared to the other districts.

I.Grimes, DoS, noted timing is unusual but is set in legislation and members need to approve as presented before the Plenary budget. Commented that if there is an issue with roads the emergency response to date has been excellent along with the response of the outdoor staff.

B. Pollard, HoF, accepting that the figure of €650k is in line with last year and accepting there will be inflation of 25% this will have to be considered as part of the overall budget allocation.

Cllr. O'Leary noted that the average payment for community grants is €650 per group and cannot undervalue the fantastic work done by groups and organisations, if this amount stays at this level many will come under pressure and these grants assist greatly and need to consider an increase.

Cllr. Power noted that tourism promotion and the Comeragh Wilds festival needs to be considered as an important festival.

I.Grimes, DoS, outlined that community department and Colette O'Brien advertise the grants to all groups, informs them of grant and organisations apply for funding and then it is approved by plenary. Staff give phenomenal support to groups and assist with many aspects and would welcome support of members to give an increase to the allocation of the budget for the grants as hasn't been increased in several years. From engagement with groups across city and county it is a vital source of funding.

Cllr. Power noted that feedback from community groups is that the grant is a recognition by the Council of the work carried out by the groups.

B. Pollard outlined that don't have clarity about energy costs and the impact on the budget, increase in the grants will reduce funding to other areas.

Cathaoirleach would like to see work on roads to continue as will have a long-term saving on the quality of roads.

Cllr. Clune agreed with comments as outlined by the other councillors noting that as this is only the discretionary element of the budget need to consider changes as part of the overall budget next month.

Budget as presented proposed by Cllr. Barron, seconded by Cllr. O'Leary and agreed by all.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Dated _____