

MINUTES**COMERAGH DISTRICT GMA MEETING****DÚICHE AN CHUMARAIGH****HELD ON 20TH OCTOBER 2021 BY MS TEAMS AND IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, DUNGARVAN****PRESENT:**

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

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Michael Walsh, Chief Executive
Mr. Paul Johnston, A/Director of Services Housing, Community & Emergency Services
Mr. Bernard Pollard, Head of Finance
Mr. Donal Murphy, Financial Accountant
Ms. Honor Dunphy, Meetings Administrator

Chief Executive outlined and noted the unsatisfactory budget process whereby the districts must be held prior to the Plenary budget meeting. As a result, it is limited in what must be considered as at district level can only vary local charges and Comeragh area doesn’t have any such charges. However, it is an opportunity within the overall budget process and will be engaging with full council in coming weeks. He outlined that there are many demands relative to the available resources and challenge in having to match to the available income. The reality from a budgetary stance is that there are no substantial increases in the overall budget with nominal 2% increase in rates and small increase in the local property tax. When considering broader parameters, it is difficult to maintain the same level of service and becoming more difficult in the current climate with increased energy and construction costs. The additional government assistance to businesses due to Covid has positively supported the council with the subsidisation of rates which has maintained a stability in collections noting that as businesses reopen the maintenance of the supports at a national level cannot be maintained. He outlined that the document as circulated is an attempt to reflect the discretionary elements in term of the budget and is not the full budget. There is limited discretion within these areas also after fixed costs are paid with payroll being a large element of this. Highlighted that currently have significant opening up of capital spending, active travel funding and footpath replacements noting that the organisation is stretched in regard of personnel across a whole host of areas stating that activity levels are back towards 2008 levels.

Cllr. Power outlined that local schemes are a big addition to funding for the region.

Cllr. Barron noted limited funding for festivals in Comeragh district and sees that there is no provision for this stating that district requires funding allocation for the district.

Cllr. Clune noted praise in relation to response from the Executive and council departments to the Covid pandemic and works that have been undertaken in relation to the district with transformational effect in relation to improvements in footpath.

Cllr. O’Leary outlined that district has progressed and improved noting there will be challenging times ahead.

B. Pollard, HoF, outlined that there is a frustration regarding the sequence of events for the budget process. He noted that the documents as circulated relates to the spend for 2020 where a number of festivals and events were cancelled because of the pandemic.

Cllr. Brazil outlined that the main issues for the district relate to housing and roads and requested if additional funding could be set aside for the adaptation grants for tenants in social housing. He complimented the great works in the district noting that the additional grants from government are of great assistance.

CE, M. Walsh noted need to consider in context of the budget that majority of budget for adaption grants comes from the Department and matched locally, the demand far exceeds our budgetary capacity noting there were delays because of Covid.

P. Johnston, A/ DoS, noted the budget for adaptation grants is a reoccurring issue where there is only a limited funding pool with a significant increase in demand due to. Need to look at most efficient and optimal use of local authority stock.

Cathaoirleach thanked the Executive and members for their work towards the improvement of the district.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Dated _____