

Minutes of the Adjourned Statutory Budget meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Civic Offices, Carrickmacross on Monday 1st December, 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

Chair: Cllr P. McNally, Cathaoirleach.

Present: Cllrs Bannigan, Bennett, Campbell, Carthy, Conlon, Connolly, Crowe, Coyle, Gallagher, Keelan, Maxwell, McElvaney, McKenna, McPhillips, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Mr. E. Cummins, County Manager, Mr. P. Clifford and Mr. A. King, Directors of Service, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, Mr. J. McGrath, Senior Engineer, Mr. J. McKernan, Senior Executive Engineer, and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

At the outset, the Cathaoirleach welcomed all present to the Civic Offices in Carrickmacross.

Request to Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government:

At the request of the Cathaoirleach, the Meetings Administrator read a response from the Private Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government advising that Minister Kelly was not in a position to meet with a deputation from the Council to discuss the budget for 2015. It also advised that it was not possible to provide any further additional funding in excess of that already indicated.

A number of members expressed disappointment that the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government had declined the Council's request for a meeting. They referred to the decline in funding for roads and to the subsequent deterioration in the county's roads.

On the proposal of Cllr B. McKenna, seconded by Cllrs McElvaney and McNally, it was agreed that the Council would write again to Minister Kelly, acknowledging his busy schedule and re-stating its request for a meeting at a time that would be suitable to the Minister.

Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance referred to the Draft Budget for 2015 a copy of which had been circulated to each member. He then proceeded to outline the budget provision for 2015 under the various divisions.

Division A – Housing and Building:

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2015 under this division.

A number of members referred to the recently announced Social Housing Strategy 2020 and enquired as to the details of the strategy.

On the proposal of Cllr B. McKenna, seconded by Cllr Conlon, it was agreed that a presentation on the Social Housing Strategy would be given to members at the January Council meeting.

On the proposal of Cllr Gallagher, seconded by Cllr O'Hanlon, it was agreed that Monaghan County Council calls on the Minister for the Environment, Alan Kelly T.D., to increase the "rental caps" to a more realistic level and also to ensure that all applicants on RAS and HAP remain on the Council's Housing list.

On the proposal of Cllr Coyle, seconded by Cllr Gallagher, it was agreed that, in regard to the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme, Monaghan County Council demands the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Alan Kelly, T.D., to reverse the changes to the application criteria of the 1st January 2014 – increasing the qualifying age from 65 to 66 years – and the reduction in maximum grant figures, as these schemes allow persons to remain in their homes, thereby saving the State enormous sums of money for permanent residential care.

Division B – Roads Transport and Safety:

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2015 under this division and responded to queries from the members.

On the proposal of Cllr O'Hanlon, seconded by Cllr Gallagher, it was agreed that Monaghan County Council calls on the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Transport to ensure that all funding for roads is allocated early in the year and that all major and town centre works on our roads are completed by the end of August.

On the proposal of Cllr Keelan, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor, it was agreed that Monaghan County Council writes to the Ministers for Transport and Finance requesting that the Local Improvements Scheme is reinstated as soon as possible.

On the proposal of Cllr B. McKenna, seconded by Cllr Gallagher, it was agreed that this Council writes to the Minister for Transport seeking additional funding from that received in 2014 in order to prevent the further deterioration of our county roads

Division C – Water Services:

Mr. Murray informed the members that the net cost to the Council of the Water Services budget for 2015 was circa €108,000.

Division D – Development Management:

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2015 under this division and responded to queries from the members.

In response to queries from the members regarding the Tourism budget it was agreed that a presentation on Tourism would be made at a Council meeting in early 2015.

At this point Cllr McElvaney declared an interest and withdrew from the meeting room, prior to the consideration of Division E.

Division E – Environmental Services

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2015 under this division.

On the proposal of Cllr O’Hanlon, seconded by Cllr Gallagher, it was agreed that Monaghan County Council increase the number of motion cameras in relation to illegal dumping and review the situation after 12 months.

It was agreed that this motion would be referred to the Environment SPC for consideration.

Draft Connacht Ulster Regional Waste Management Plan:

Mr. A. King, Director advised the members that the Draft Regional Waste Management Plan was now at consultation stage. A public meeting for this purpose would be held in the Glencarn Hotel, Castleblayney on the 18th December at 7pm. There would be a presentation to the elected members earlier that day at 5.00 pm

Landfill:

In response to queries from the members relating to the Council’s Landfill at Scotch Corner, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance stated that no decision had been taken by the Council to close the landfill facility. Should the Council take the decision to close the facility, there would be significant remediation costs for future years and provision would have to be made in the budget to cover these costs.

Mr. A. King, Director stated that the Council had recently engaged consultants to examine the future viability of the landfill and that the report would be considered by the Landfill Committee and a recommendation would be brought to the full Council. He stated that the current cell that was open at the facility was nearing capacity and a detailed evaluation of the remaining space was being carried out. He stated that annual leachate costs amount to circa €400,000 and that capping of the existing cell would cost in the region of €1.5m. If the Council were to decide to open a new cell, this would cost in the region of €3m.

Cllr McElvaney then returned to the meeting.

Division F – Recreation and Amenity

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2015 under this division and responded to queries from the members

On the proposal of Cllr Maxwell, seconded by Cllr O’Hanlon it was agreed that this Council puts €10,000 into a fund to prepare a cost benefit analysis report into the provision of a new County Museum – this €10,000 to be matched by €5,000 from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Cllr McPhillips proposed, Cllrs Bannigan and McElvaney seconded

That in recognition of the historical situation where Ballybay Town could not raise its own finances and Monaghan County Council's improved role in community development, Monaghan County Council will pool all contributions to community groups and put all monies into the Community Development Fund.

A vote by show of hands resulted in 9 for, 9 against. The Cathaoirleach gave his casting vote against the motion. The motion was declared defeated.

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon, seconded by Cllr B. McKenna it was agreed that the €4,000 support finance provided in the draft Budget for the Monaghan Country & Western Festival be transferred to the provision for general festivals in Monaghan Town in 2015 (line 62) as per supports previously committed by Monaghan Town Council.

Division G – Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare:

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2015 under this division.

It was agreed that the Council discuss 'in committee' the situation relating to the tender for dog pound services. Following a brief discussion, the meeting returned to public session.

Division H – Miscellaneous Services

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2015 under this division.

On the proposal of Cllr McNally, seconded by Cllr Gallagher, it was agreed that the Council write to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government enquiring what savings have been achieved by the introduction of a shared service for payroll for local authorities.

On the proposal of Cllr Gallagher, seconded by Cllr O'Hanlon it was agreed that Monaghan County Council calls on the Government to review rates on commercial properties to arrive at a more favourable rating system.

Division J – Support Services

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2015 under this division. He indicated that these charges are apportioned across the other divisions.

Adoption of Draft Budget 2015:

On the proposal of Cllr McElvaney, seconded by Cllr Coyle, it was agreed that the Council adopt the draft Budget for 2015, as amended.

Determination of Annual Rate on Valuation and base year adjustment:

Cllr McElvaney proposed, Cllr Coyle seconded

That the general Annual Rate on Valuation for 2015 of 59.61 and the following Base Year Adjustments for former rating authority areas be adopted

<i>Monaghan County Council</i>	<i>-3.41</i>
<i>Carrickmacross Town Council</i>	<i>+1.30</i>
<i>Castleblayney Town Council</i>	<i>-3.61</i>
<i>Clones Town Council</i>	<i>-0.71</i>
<i>Monaghan Town Council</i>	<i>+9.53</i>

Refund of rates on vacant commercial premises

On the proposal of Cllr McNally, seconded by Cllr O'Hanlon, it was agreed that the level of refund of rates on vacant commercial premises, that are available for rent or lease or are undergoing refurbishment, be 100%.

The Mayor thanked the members of the Corporate Policy Group, the Management Team and all the staff who contributed to the preparation of the draft budget.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach Meetings Administrator

Date: _____