

Minutes of Adjourned March Council Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Council Chamber, Mtek Building, Armagh Road, Monaghan on Friday 28th March, 2014 at 5.00 pm

Chair: Cllr S. Conlon, Mayor.

Present: Cllrs Bannigan, Bennett, Carthy, Carville, Connolly, Crowe, Gallagher, Keelan, Maxwell, McElvaney, McKenna, McNally, Murray, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Mr. A. King, Deputy County Manager, Mr. P. Clifford, Director of Service, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

Apologies: Cllr S. Coyle, C. McPhillips and J. O'Brien.
Mr. E. Cummins, County Manager.

At the outset, Cllr McElvaney proposed a vote of sympathy with Cllr Carville, on the death of his father, Arthur, a former member of the Council. Cllr McElvaney paid tribute to the former member who was elected to the Council in 1974 and served until 1999, a period of 25 years. He said that the late Arthur was a loyal friend and party colleague. He was a well recognised business-man and an excellent family man. Cllr Bannigan seconded the vote of sympathy which was unanimously agreed.

All members joined in paying tribute to the late Arthur Carville and recalled aspects of his service on the Council.

Cllr G. Carville thanked all the members for their solidarity and expression of sympathy and he thanked all who attended the wake and funeral Mass.

On the proposal of Cllr McElvaney, seconded by Cllr Conlon, it was agreed that the sympathy of the Council be extended to Mr. D. Treanor, Director of Service on the death of his step-mother, the late Kathleen Treanor, Bailieboro.

On the proposal of Cllr S. Treanor, seconded by Cllr B. McKenna it was agreed that the sympathy of the Council be extended to Cllr P. Connolly on the death of his cousins, Martina Hughes, RIP, late of Seveagh, Glaslough and Jimmy Treanor, RIP, late of Milltown, Monaghan.

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon, seconded by Cllr B. McKenna it was agreed that the sympathy of the Council be extended to Ms. Marcella Carey and Ms. Donna Macklin both Council employees on the death of their mothers, Gertie McQuaid RIP and Carmel Macklin, RIP.

Mr. A. King, Deputy County Manager joined in the votes of sympathy on behalf of the staff of the Council.

On the proposal of Cllr McElvaney, seconded by Cllr Maxwell, it was agreed to adjourn the meeting for ten minutes as a mark of respect to the late Arthur Carville.

The Mayor then indicated that he was proceeding with the balance of the agenda for the March meeting.

7. To receive briefing on the Local Government Reform Act 2014

Mr. A. King, Director of Service referred to the briefing document that had been circulated to members with the March agenda. He then outlined in detail the main provisions of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 which provides legislation to deal with the following -

- To provide for the position of Chief Executive
- To dissolve the Town Councils
- To make provision for Municipal Districts
- To assign additional reserved functions to the Local Authority members
- To dissolve the C.D.B. and make provision for Local Community Development Committees
- Provide for an increased role for Local Authority in economic development and enterprise support
- To provide for Regional Assemblies

A number of members expressed their concern at the lack of information that is being made available to them and the general public in relation to the proposed changes to the local electoral areas and the location of the new Municipal District offices. The following issues were raised by the members:

- No information as to what services are being decentralised to the Municipal Districts. Services should be decentralised so as to be within easy reach of the public – reference was made to the decentralisation programme undertaken by Donegal County Council in 2002.
- The Town Councils are being abolished without any consultation with local people.
- There is a need for the services currently available through the Town Councils to be available through the Municipal Districts, particularly roads and housing.
- The Municipal Districts will just be ‘talking shops’.
- What is the future of the five Town Council buildings?
- That the Council consider the decentralisation of services to the currently un-occupied space in the Carrickmacross Civic Centre.
- The need for the public to be advised of changes to the local electoral areas.
- Castleblayney Town has been decimated – no office and no services will be delivered from Castleblayney, other than a token service being offered through the local library.
- Section 140 process is being diluted – Monaghan County Council never abused this power.
- The functions/services are being taken away from local Councils – water services, housing capital programme, fire service and education grants.
- The Minister took advantage of the economic downturn to reduce the number of local councillors in a ‘so-called money saving exercise’.
- Town Council Staff don’t know where they are going and morale is very low. Existing staff should not be moved.
- Local democracy has been undermined.

Cllr McElvaney proposed, Cllr Bannigan seconded that the Council write to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government requesting that where County Councils decide, by resolution, to use the title of 'Mayor' that they be permitted to do so and that the Local Government Reform Act, be amended to reflect this.

A vote by show of hands resulted in 3 for the proposal, 6 against and 8 abstentions. The Mayor declared the motion defeated.

Responding to the issues raised, Mr. A. King, Director of Services advised that the presentation was given to provide clarity on the provisions of the Local Government Reform Act. He said that it is the County Manager's intention to bring a report to the members by the end of April which will set out detailed proposals for each area. The basis of all proposals is the provision of an efficient, effective service to the public which will also be cost effective. The Council must maximise the use of all existing buildings before spending money on renting more. The reform process necessitates a review of all functions/roles within the local authority.

It was agreed that the Council would undertake additional publicity in order to raise public awareness of the changes to the local electoral areas.

Mr. P. Clifford, Director of Services confirmed that he would make a presentation at the April Council meeting on the Local Enterprise Office and the Local Community Development Programme.

The time being 7.15 pm it was agreed that the remaining business of the meeting be transferred to the April Council meeting.

The meeting then concluded.