

Minutes of Statutory Budget Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Mtek Building, Armagh Road, Monaghan on Friday 17th December, 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

Chair: Cllr J. Crowe, Mayor.

Present: Cllrs. Bannigan, Carthy, Carville, Conlon, Connolly, Coyle, Gallagher, Humphreys, Keelan, Maxwell, McElvaney, B. McKenna, S. McKenna, McNally, Murray, O'Brien, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Mr. D. Fallon, A/County Manager, Mr. P. Clifford, Mr. A. King, Mr. D. Treanor, Directors of Service, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, and Mr. James McNally, Financial Management Accountant and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

At the outset the Mayor thanked the Acting County Manager, Head of Finance and Directors of Service for the efficient way the draft budget had been prepared.

He thanked the Mayor and members of the Corporate Policy Group, the Head of Finance and staff in the finance department, the Directors of Service and all the staff who contributed to the preparation of the draft budget.

Mr. D. Fallon, Acting County Manager thanked the Mayor for his comments. He stated that the 2011 budget has been drafted in the context of a continuing recession which will have a negative impact on the income from goods and services. He further stated that the annual rate on valuation and the water and waste water charges are being held at the same level as 2009 and 2010.

Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance then advised the Members that at the conclusion of the CPG Budget Meeting of 8th December 2010, after reviewing expenditure and income, an amount of expenditure over income of €727,741 remained. In order to present a balanced budget for the Budget Meeting the Acting County Manager stated that he would, in accordance with the Local Government Act, 2001, present the budget to the Council, on the basis of a reduction of €727,741 in the provision for Roads own resources and he further stated that if the Local Government Fund allocation for 2011 is reduced by less than 10%, as provided for in the draft budget, then the additional funds will be put back into the Roads provision. Mr. Murray confirmed that the Local Government Fund Allocation was received on Thursday 9th December and the amount allocated for 2011 is €13,648,138 - €384,679 more than was estimated initially. This has resulted in a reduction of €343,062 in the provision for Roads own resources instead of €727,741 as stated in the minutes of the CPG meeting of 8th December. These changes have been made to the Draft Budget and the budget detail printout which had been circulated to the members.

Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance then outlined each of the divisions in detail, under the headings of expenditure and income.

Division J – Central Management Charge

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2011 under this division. He indicated that central management charges are apportioned across the other divisions.

Division A – Housing and Building

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2011 under this division.

On the proposal of Cllr McNally, seconded by Cllr Treanor it was agreed that the Council's Housing Section re-drafts its housing grant approval letter in an effort to better explain the grant that is being awarded and to reassure the applicants that money will be available.

Cllr McElvaney proposed that the provision for the Housing Aid for Older People Grants Scheme be the same as what was provided in the 2010 Budget.

Following clarification from the Head of Finance in relation to the 2011 provision for Housing Aid for Older People, Cllr McElvaney withdrew his proposal

Cllr Conlon proposed, Cllr Crowe seconded that a report on Social Housing Leasing and the Rental Accommodation Scheme be included on the agenda for the January Council meeting.

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon, seconded by Cllr Crowe it was agreed that the Council write to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government asking him to review the Social Housing Leasing Initiative.

Division B – Road Transportation and Safety

Prior to considering the budget provision for this division, the Members agreed to have a debate on the Council's road gritting/salting programme during the ongoing spell of freezing weather conditions.

The Acting County Manager and Mr. D. Treanor, A/Director of Services updated the members on the programme of gritting undertaken by the Council over the last two weeks. Mr. Treanor advised the Members that due to a shortage of salt supplies, the NRA had limited the Council to using a maximum of 15 tonnes of salt per night. As a result of this the Council had to confine its salting operation to the national routes in the county.

A debate followed to which a number of members contributed. During the course of the debate the following proposals were agreed –

On the proposal of Cllr O'Hanlon, seconded by Cllr McNally, it was agreed that a delegation from Monaghan County Council meet with officials from the National Roads Authority, as a matter of urgency, with a view to preparing a proper and detailed plan that will adequately deal with this issue going forward.

On the proposal of Cllr Bannigan, seconded by Cllr Humphreys, it was agreed that this Council write to the Minister for Transport Mr. Noel Dempsey, T.D., and the Government requesting that the decision to give full responsibility for the procurement of salt to the National Roads Authority be reversed immediately and that each local authority look after the procurement of their own supplies.

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon, seconded by Cllr S. McKenna, it was agreed that the Council write to the Health Service Executive enquiring what measures the HSE Disability Service is putting in place to ensure that home help personnel are able to attend to vulnerable patients during periods of inclement winter weather.

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2011 under this division.

Mr. D. Treanor responded to issues raised by the Members.

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon, seconded by Cllr S. McKenna it was agreed that the Council received a report on the impact of the Croke Park Agreement on Council services.

Division C – Water Services

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2011 under this division. He advised that it is not proposed to increase water or wastewater charges for 2011.

Mr. D. Fallon, Director responded to issues raised by the Members.

Division D – Development Management

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2011 under this division.

Mr. Paul Clifford and Mr. A. King, Directors responded to issues raised by the Members.

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon, seconded by Cllr Crowe, it was agreed that the Council write to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in relation to the Planning application fee of €65 and enquiring if there is any proposal to increase same.

Cllr O'Brien proposed, Cllr Bannigan seconded that the Council make provision for an allocation of €25,000 for the Ballybay Wetlands Centre.

On the proposal of Cllr Gallagher, seconded by Cllr S. Treanor it was agreed that decisions on all monetary proposals that affect the draft Budget are taken at the end of the meeting.

On the proposal of Cllr O'Hanlon, seconded by Cllr S. McKenna it was agreed that a set of certified accounts is received from all future applicants for grant assistance where the amount of grant allocated is in excess of €20,000.

Division E – Environmental Services

At this point Cllr McElvaney declared an interest in relation to waste collection and withdrew from the meeting room.

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2011 under this division.

Cllr Carthy referred to the provision for the Refuse Charges Hardship Scheme and requested that a formal scheme be prepared to deal with this matter.

On the proposal of Cllr Carthy, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor it was agreed that the Environment SPC would prepare a formal scheme to deal with applications from persons unable to pay their refuse charges and that the process currently being operated by the Council remain in place until a new scheme is adopted.

Cllr McElvaney re-entered the meeting room.

Division F – Recreation and Amenity

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2011 under this division.

Mr. A. King, Director responded to issues raised by the members.

Division G – Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2011 under this division and he responded to issues raised by the Members.

Division H – Miscellaneous Services

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2011 under this division.

Cllr Connolly proposed, Cllr Carthy seconded that this Council stand in line with other public servants and take a similar cut in expenses.

A number of members pointed out that they had already taken a cut in their representational payment and that the rates for travel and subsistence had been reduced significantly.

Cllr S. Treanor proposed, Cllr Carthy seconded that the Conferences Budget is divided equally between the 20 members giving each member an allocation of €4,700.

A vote by show of hands resulted in 9 for 11 against. The Mayor ruled that Cllr Treanor's motion had been defeated.

On the proposal of Cllr Carthy, seconded by Cllr O'Hanlon, it was agreed that the Council write to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Minister for Finance requesting that local authorities be permitted to waive commercial rates payments in cases of extreme hardship.

At this point a number of Members expressed the views that funding should be allocated to the GAA/FAI and the Iontas Theatre. It was agreed that this funding would be allocated at a rate of 50% of that provided in 2010. Cllrs Maxwell and Conlon requested that funding is also provided for the Garage Theatre similar to any provision that is made for Iontas. This was agreed. It was further agreed that €60,000 of the €102,500 required to meet these allocations be taken from 'roads own resources' and the balance to be identified by the Head of Finance from within the other divisions.

Adoption of Draft Budget 2011:

On the proposal of Cllr Carthy, seconded by Cllr Conlon it was agreed that the Council adopt the draft Budget for 2011, subject to the following amendments

Division D	-	Provision of €15,000	- Football Association of Ireland
Division D	-	Provision of €25,000	- Co. Monaghan G.A.A.
Division D	-	Provision of €12,500	- Ballybay Wetlands Centre
Division D	-	Provision of €25,000	- Iontas Theatre
Division D	-	Provision of €25,000	- Garage Theatre

Determination of Annual Rate on Valuation:

On the proposal of Cllr Carthy, seconded by Cllr Conlon, it was agreed, that the general Annual Rate on Valuation for 2011 of 56.20 and town charges rate of 9.50 for Ballybay Town be adopted.

The Mayor thanked the Members and Staff for their co-operation in the preparation, consideration and adoption of the Budget for 2011.

Votes of Sympathy

It was agreed that the Council extend a vote of sympathy to the following –

- Ms. Bernie Bradley, a member of the Council staff on the death of her uncle Oliver O'Rourke, Dunogue, Carrickmacross, RIP
- Ms. Mary Marron, a member of the Council staff on the death of her mother Mrs. Philomena Watters, Annalitten, Castleblayney, RIP

The Acting County Manager associated himself and the staff with the votes of sympathy, which was passed in silence, all present standing.

The Mayor wished all present a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Meara

Meetings Administrator

Date: _____
