

Minutes of Special Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Mtek Building, Armagh Road, Monaghan on Thursday 26th July, 2012 at 4.00 pm

Chair: Cllr H. McElvaney, Mayor.

Present: Cllrs Bannigan, Carthy, Carville, Conlon, Connolly, Crowe, Keelan, McElvaney, B. McKenna, McNally, O'Brien, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Mr. D. Fallon, A/County Manager, Mr. P. Clifford and Mr. A. King, Mr. D. Treanor, Directors of Service, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, Mr. K. McNally, Senior Executive Engineer and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

Apologies: Cllrs Gallagher, Maxwell, McPhillips, Murray and O'Hanlon.

1. To consider implications for Budget 2012 arising from the €1.36m reduction in Local Government Fund allocation.

Mr. D. Fallon, A/County Manager referred to Circular Fin 09/2012 dated 18th July, 2012 from the Department of Finance (copy of which had been circulated). The circular notified the Council of a reduction in the General Purpose Grant 2012 amounting to €1,362,358 to reflect the 54% collection rate for the household charge and that 25% of the reduction would be offset against the Q3 grant payment. The circular also advised that local authorities are required to '*achieve a balanced budget, taking into account the reduced income and should reforecast expenditure for the remainder of the year to achieve balance.*'

He referred to a subsequent letter from Minister Hogan dated 24th July which notified the County and City Managers that local authorities can progressively recoup their original general purpose grant allocation through improved household charge compliance. This incentivises local authorities to take the necessary measures to improve household charge compliance in their administrative areas. The Minister also advised that the final amount of General Purpose Grants available for 2012 will be revisited and reviewed in Quarter 4 to take account of the then financial position including progress on securing an increased household charge yield.

Mr. Fallon confirmed that approx. €340,000 had been taken off the Q3 payment to the Council and that it would be necessary to revisit the Budget 2012 provision. The Directors were endeavouring to identify savings as follows: €25,000 in Roads, Environment and Emergency Services; €75,000 in Water Services and the balance across the remaining services. He further stated that 11,749 households had paid the charge at 23 July 2012. This leaves circa 8400 households in the county who have still to pay the charge amounting to €340,000 still outstanding. The Council had a dedicated team in place to pursue collection of the outstanding amount. However, they had not been supplied with a complete database of persons liable for the charge – it only had access, on a read only basis, to the names of those persons who had already paid.

A debate followed to which all members contributed. A number of members were critical of the reduction in the Q3 grant payment and referred to the Minister's decision to introduce the charge without the proper resources having been in place to collect it and

local authorities were now being penalised for the poor collection rates. Members called on the Minister to review his decision.

As a result of disorder in the meeting room, the Mayor adjourned the meeting for a period of five minutes so that order could be restored. Following the brief adjournment, the debate on this matter resumed.

The following proposals were put forward during the debate.

Cllr McNally proposed, Cllr Coyle seconded that this Council write to Mr. Phil Hogan, T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government condemning his decision to reduce our funding as a result of the non collection of the household charge, which is a result of his incompetence in the way the charge was introduced. We call on the Minister to immediately reverse his decision.

The motion, if passed, to be circulated to all the T.D.'s and Senators in the constituency.

A vote by show of hands on Cllr McNally's motion resulted in 11 for 3 against. The Mayor declared the motion carried.

Cllr Carthy proposed, Cllr Conlon seconded that the members of Monaghan County Council call on the County Manager not to cut services to the people of our communities on the basis of Circular Fin 09/2012 and to refuse to implement any financial cuts to Council programmes.

A recorded vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs Carthy, Conlon, Connolly, Coyle, Crowe, Keelan, B. McKenna, McNally, O'Brien, P. Treanor and S. Treanor. **Total 11**

Against: Cllrs Bannigan, Carville, McElvaney **Total 3**

The Mayor declared the motion carried.

Cllr Bannigan proposed, Cllr Carville seconded that the Members of Monahan County Council call on the Management to take all reasonable steps to attempt to collect the outstanding household charge in order to ensure the best possible service is provided to the people of County Monaghan. The Members of the Council acknowledge the 54% of people who have paid the charge and that as an example to others the members of this Council who have not yet paid the charge pay it immediately in order to protect the services to the public.

A recorded vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs Bannigan, Carville, McElvaney **Total 3**

Against: Cllrs Carthy, Conlon, Connolly, Crowe, Keelan, B. McKenna, P. Treanor and S. Treanor. **Total 8**

Abstentions: Cllrs Coyle, McNally and O'Brien **Total 3**

The Mayor declared Cllr Bannigan's motion defeated.

Cllr Carthy proposed, Cllr Conlon seconded that under no circumstances will Monaghan County Council take legal proceedings against any citizens of our county in relation to the household charge.

A recorded vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs Carthy, Conlon, Crowe, Keelan, B. McKenna, P. Treanor **Total 6**

Against: Cllrs Bannigan, Carville, Coyle, McElvaney, McNally and O'Brien
Total 6

Abstentions: Cllrs Connolly and S. Treanor **Total 2**

The Mayor gave his casting vote against the motion. The Mayor declared the motion defeated.

The A/County Manager stated that he could not rule out taking legal action to recover outstanding charges as the Council was legally empowered to do so.

2. Clones Erne East Sports Partnership Project - to consider increased funding commitment from Monaghan County Council

On the proposal of Cllr Carville, seconded by Cllr Coyle it was agreed that the members enter 'into Committee' to discuss this matter, in accordance with Section 45 of the Local Government Act 2001.

Mr. A. King circulated a copy of a detailed report relating to this project to each member and he explained why it was necessary to provide funding to cover the budget shortfall in this project. Following his report Mr. King responded to queries from the Members. Thereafter the meeting returned to public session.

On the proposal of Cllr McElvaney, seconded by Cllr P. Treanor it was agreed that the Council commit €487,976 to meet the budget shortfall on the Clones Erne East Sports Partnership Project, in accordance with the report circulated by Mr. A. King, Director of Service.

On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor seconded by Cllr B. McKenna it was agreed that Monaghan County Council requests the successful contractor for the Clones Erne East Sports Project to ensure that as much economic and social benefit as possible accrues to the local community during the construction phase. This can be achieved by employing local sub-contractors, local workers, local apprentices and long term unemployed, sourcing materials from the local area and by arranging local catering and accommodation.

3. To nominate one Member to the Board of the Garage Theatre.

The Members considered the letter dated 3rd July, 2012 from the Chief Executive Officer of County Monaghan V.E.C., enclosing a new Garage Theatre Terms of Reference. The letter also sought one nominee from Monaghan County Council to sit on the Board of the Garage Theatre.

On the proposal of Cllr McNally, seconded by Cllr O'Brien it was agreed that Cllr S. Coyle be appointed as the Council's nominee to the Board of the Garage Theatre.

It was agreed that the Council congratulate Mr. Martin O'Brien on being appointed CEO of the amalgamated body to be known as Cavan-Monaghan VEC and wish him every success in his new appointment.

The meeting then concluded.