

Minutes of meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Council Chamber, Mtek Building, Monaghan on Monday 21st October, 2013 at 10.00 a.m.

Chair: Cllr S. Conlon, Mayor.

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

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

Apology: Cllrs Bennett and McPhillips

On the proposal of Cllr Carville, seconded by Cllr Crowe it was agreed that the sympathy of the Council be extended to the McArdle family, Drumhowan and the Sisters of Mercy, Castleblayney on the death of Sister Celine McArdle, RIP.

Cllrs Carville and Crowe paid tribute to the late Sister Celine. She had made a huge impact on many many lives and her crowning achievement was the Castleblayney Arts and Community Resource Centre (Iontas). She will be a great loss to her family, the Sisters of Mercy and the local community of Castleblayney.

A number of members joined in the tributes paid to the late Sister Celine as did the County Manager on behalf of the staff.

It was agreed that the Council would be officially represented at the funeral by the Mayor, Cllr S. Conlon.

A minutes silence was observed as a mark of respect.

Urgent Business:

The Mayor advised that he had received a notice of urgent business from the Sinn Fein Members in relation to the Budget 2014.

Cllr Maxwell stated that a decision had been taken at a previous meeting that motions of urgent business would not be dealt with at adjourned/special meetings of the Council. The Meetings Administrator confirmed that the Council had previously agreed this.

Cllr B. McKenna stated that this decision had not been recommended by the Standing Orders and Procedures Committee and he proposed that the matter be referred to that committee for consideration. This was unanimously agreed.

1. Presentation on the Re-organisation of Local Government:

Mr. D. Fallon, County Manager advised the members that Mr. P. Clifford would give a presentation on the proposed re-organisation of Local Government. Mr. Fallon

referred to the publication of the Local Government Bill 2013, which provides for the dissolution of 80 town councils and their replacement by municipal districts. It also establishes membership levels within the new structures. A decision has to be made as to where the offices for the districts will be located. The legislation also provides for the replacement of County Managers with Chief Executives. The Council Executive had been engaged in workforce planning over the past few months and had looked at the various service areas. He said that they would examine how customer expectations would be met under the new regime. There will be a reduction in democratic input with the removal of town councils and they will be looking at how services would be provided in the future. Consultations were due to take place with staff and the members should be closely involved also.

In his presentation, Mr. P. Clifford, Director of Services outlined the following:

- Changes in terms of staffing and expenditure between 2008 and 2013
- Reduction in Rates, the Local Government Fund and Road Grants
- Changes Role for local authorities – Student Grants, Driving licences, Irish Water, Fire Service reform, Centralised Procurement, Voluntary Redundancy
- Local Electoral Area Boundary Commission Report - Monaghan will have three municipal districts – Carrickmacross/Castleblayney; Ballybay/Clones and Monaghan with six members to be elected for each district.
- Functions of Municipal Districts – Representational powers/Enforcement powers/Policy making powers as well as Housing/Roads/Civic and Community
- Location of County Council offices – County Offices and Mtek II
- Proposed Municipal Offices – Monaghan Town Hall; Clones Market House and Carrickmacross Civic Offices and a presence in Castleblayney Library.
- Proposed Municipal depots – Monaghan (Old Cross Square and Emyvale); Ballybay/Clones (98 Avenue Clones and Lislanyl, Castleblayney); Carrickmacross/Castleblayney (Lislanyl and Carrickmacross). Small depots retained for street cleaning in Carrickmacross, Clones and Castleblayney.

Following the presentation the following points were made by the Members:

- The new legislation will result in the decimation of local government – the AMAI are taking legal advice around the disbandment of town councils
- A presence is required in Ballybay and Castleblayney towns to facilitate access to services for the public.
- An Economic Development Officer should be appointed for the Ballybay Clones municipal district.
- Members are losing powers - Section 140 power has been diluted.
- It's not possible to deliver the same level of services given the reduction in staff numbers since 2008. Concerns were expressed about future staffing levels given the moratorium on recruitment that is in place.
- The savings referred to by Minister Hogan cannot be achieved
- Structures do not serve local democracy – purely a mapping exercise with no thought for local democracy.
- Too much emphasis on the centralisation of administration
- What will happen existing offices

- Will services be decentralised to new districts.
- Rates base in towns – Rates could increase – this will impact on businesses – what additional services will be offered?

Cllr Murray said he welcomed the proposals being put forward which would save money and create a more efficient service. He was surprised at the negativity towards the proposals. The Municipal districts would have a platform to raise issues in relation to voluntary organisations and this was also to be welcomed. While the Council had a major role in economic development he felt that councillors did not have a proper input into this area and he hoped this would change in the future.

Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, explained that the Council will converge the rates over a ten-year period. There will be no change to rates in the 2014 budget, but from 2015 the rates will start to be converged. In relation to the setting of the annual rate this was a function reserved to the elected members.

Regarding the provision of an office in Ballybay Mr. P. Clifford stated that there is no office there at present. Provision of such an office will cost in the region of €100,000 per annum and this cost would have to be taken out of the budget for that area. Each municipal district will have its own budget – the County Council will have to allocate an annual budget.

On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr Bannigan it was agreed that Monaghan County Council retain a public office in Ballybay.

On the proposal of Cllr P. Treanor, seconded by Cllr Bannigan it was agreed that a dedicated economic development official be appointed to the Ballybay-Clones Municipal District.

On the proposal of Cllr Crowe, seconded by Cllr Keelan it was agreed that Monaghan County Council retain an engineer in its Municipal Office in Castleblayney (not in library). Without this Castleblayney will suffer as a result – Castleblayney is the worst hit town in Monaghan.

On the proposal of Cllr Keelan, seconded by Cllr Crowe it was agreed that the new area boundary maps and a brief explanation of the new changes in terms of administration, etc., be circulated to the local community centres/GAA Clubs etc along the boundaries where the changes will take place, to ensure that the public are properly informed.

It was agreed to defer Item 2 (Progress Report on the Transition to Irish Water) and Item 3 (Notices of Motion) to the November meeting.

Retirement of County Manager:

Cllr Conlon referred to the announcement, at an earlier meeting, by Mr. David Fallon, County Manager of his intention to retire from the local authority service in December 2013. Cllr Conlon advised the members that this was Mr. Fallon's last Council meeting and he wished to thank him for his years of service both to the local authority sector and to Monaghan Local Authorities. Mr. Fallon had previously worked with Wicklow, Offaly, Cavan and Laois

County Councils before taking up appointment as Director of Services with Monaghan County Council in 2003. For the last three years he had held the position of County Manager. Cllr Conlon said that the Council had been fortunate to have had David as Manager and he had steered the team very ably during that period. He wished him good health to enjoy his retirement along with his wife and family.

All members joined in the sentiments expressed by the Mayor and expressed their appreciation for his service over the past nine years. Members referred to David as being extremely courteous, a gentleman who was very affable and easy to get on with. He had an excellent command of the Irish language and had a great empathy with the people of the county and showed a genuine care and respect for both the councillor and the general public. They wished him many years of health and happiness to enjoy his retirement.

Mr. P. Clifford, Director of Services spoke on behalf of the staff. He thanked David for his dedicated service with the Council. He had undertaken the role of County Manager and Town Manager in both Monaghan and Castleblayney towns in a professional yet quiet and unassuming manner. He wished him and his family good health and happiness.

Mr. Fallon then responded to the tributes paid to him. He thanked those who had spoken for their kind words and for their good wishes. He had enjoyed his term in the public service and as Director of Service and County Manager. He said it was easy to help people in County Monaghan as they have done a lot for themselves.

He thanked his Management Team for all their support during his term as Manager and also the staff of the County Council and the various Town Councils.

He paid tribute to the outdoor staff who are the public face of local authorities. He referred to their commitment and dedication which he said was very evident during the two recent very severe winters.

In acknowledging the role of the media, he paid tribute to the calibre of reporting by the Northern Standard, particularly in regard to the fairness/impartiality of the reporting of Council meetings. He also acknowledged the role of local radio.

He wished the Council members and staff well in the future.

Meeting with IDA Ireland:

It was agreed that the Council would accept the invitation from the Head of Regional Development, IDA Ireland, Ms. Breda O'Toole, to meet with a delegation from the Council. The meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 30th October at 11.00 am in the Council Meeting Room, Mtek Building. The following members were selected as part of the delegation –

Mayor/Deputy Mayor
Cllr Aidan Murray
Cllr Robbie Gallagher

Cllr Pat Treanor
Cllr Paudge Connolly

It was agreed that any member of the Council who wished to attend the meeting could do so.

Votes of Congratulations:

It was agreed that the Council extend a vote of congratulations to the following:

- *Gaeil Triúcha GFC on winning the Intermediate Football Championship Final.*
- *Scotstown GFC on winning the Senior Football Championship Final*
- *Carrickmacross Emmets on winning the Minor Football Championship Final.*
- *Emyvale GFC on winning the Junior Football Championship Final*
- *Clontibret Camogie Club on winning the Ulster Junior Camogie Championship.*

The meeting then concluded.