

Minutes of Special Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Council Chamber, Mtek Building, Monaghan on Wednesday 24th September, 2014 at 11.30 a.m.

Chair: Cllr Pádraig McNally, Cathaoirleach.

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

Mr. E. Cummins, Chief Executive, Mr. P. Clifford and Mr. A. King, Director of Services, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, Ms. P. Monahan, Financial Management Accountant and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

Apology: Cllr Connolly.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Ms. Patricia Monahan who had recently taken up appointment with Monaghan County Council as the Financial Management Accountant.

1. To consider setting the local adjustment factor for the Local Property Tax:

In accordance with Articles 4-7 of the Local Property Tax (Local Adjustment Factor) Regulations 2014, the following documents were circulated to each member:

- (i) Estimation of income and expenditure.
- (ii) Summary of financial position of Monaghan County Council.
- (iii) Estimate of financial effect of implementing a local adjustment factor in the local authority area.
- (iv) Report to Corporate Policy Group by Chief Executive.
- (v) Submission received from the Irish Farmers Association.
- (vi) Draft minutes of Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 10th September, 2014.

In addition, Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined details of the estimate for payroll and the differences between the 2014 budget and the 2015 budget summary. He stated that a 1% reduction in the LPT rates would cost the Council €39,188 and a 15% reduction would cost €587,820.

Mr. E. Cummins, Chief Executive gave a presentation to the Members outlining the following:

- The Council's focus and priorities for the next seven years.
- The requirement to discuss the development of the draft budget for 2015 with the CPG.
- The proposed Strategy which will make provision for current revenue deficit; the closure of the Scotch Corner landfill; lump sum and pensions; a General Municipal Allocation for each M.D./separate allocation for Monaghan Town and for the building of a modest corporate extension.
- Two primary objectives – (i) to enforce the pre-eminent role of the elected members and make MD's the drivers of economic and community development and (ii) to plan for the future of the county.

In regard to planning for the future Mr. Cummins outlined the need to make the following funding provisions:

- (i) Action Plan to Visit, Explore & Experience Monaghan – create “Monaghan Brand” - €25K
- (ii) Traffic Management Plan/Computer Model Monaghan Town -€75K pa over next 4yrs
- (iii) Lough Muckno & Gate Lodges (incl. structural assessment and possible uses) - €25K
- (iv) By-pass Monaghan - additional SEE - €60K
- (v) Retail Strategy and Engagement with Business Community – some outside expertise required - €15K
- (vi) Build relationship with Coillte – Rossmore Park - €50K
- (vii) Additional funding to Roads Budget - €300K
- (viii) Market House Clones - €200K
- (ix) Provide for design and Part VIII for modest extension to Corporate HQ - €75K
- (x) Repairs to Corporate building stock (old MTC HQ, roof leaking) - €50K
- (xi) Prepare for alignment of commercial rates (2016)

Mr. Cummins also outlined the following examples for community and economic development at Municipal District level.

- Address dereliction at a local level e.g. Health Centre Ballybay
- Improve shared spaces
- Provision of town centre wi-fi
- Lough Egish Food Park Infrastructure (including broadband)
- Local road improvements to SME’s (removal of bends, signage etc.)
- Development of industrial sites
- Strategic purchase of lands
- Assisting indigenous crafts
- Promotion of festivals
- Contribution to LEADER/INTERREG funding

He assured the members that the 15% of the LPT (€590,000) would be allocated equally between the three Municipal Districts for the benefit of every member of these communities. It would be at the discretion of the Municipal District members to allocate this funding. He urged the members not to leave any money behind in the Department but to ensure that every available cent is given back collectively to the communities that paid for it.

In response to queries from members, Mr. A. King, Director of Service clarified the position in relation to the Council’s Landfill at Scotch Corner. He explained that it is necessary to make plans for the closure of the landfill in late 2015 as Phase 3 will reach its capacity, in accordance with the terms of the EPA licence. Mr. King stated that whilst income at the facility had improved in 2013 and 2014, the reality is that it’s not making money but, rather, losing less money.

Mr. Cummins confirmed that he recently met with the Consultants engaged to carry out a study on the Council’s landfill and who would bring forward options for consideration by the Council. Following its closure the facility will still have to be maintained for the next 30 years. There will be significant costs to be met in terms of staff, leachate, transport, etc. The Council should have made provision in the past for a sinking fund to meet these costs. He stated that he would keep the members informed of all developments.

At 12.50 pm, the Cathaoirleach, with the consent of the members, adjourned the meeting for 15 minutes to allow the political groupings to consider the information provided by the officials.

On resumption, Cllr B. McKenna, thanked the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance for all the information that had been disseminated. He said he was not happy that the members were being asked to make a decision on the local property tax, when the budget had not been formulated yet. People have suffered dramatically from taxes/cuts imposed on them over the last eight budgets and the Council now has an opportunity to say to the Government that enough is enough.

Cllr McKenna then made the following proposal

“ That Monaghan County Council vary the Local Property Tax by minus 7.5% and that the Council write to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government requesting that he allocate €300,000 to Monaghan County Council from Motor Taxation receipts ”

Cllr P. Treanor seconded the proposal. Cllrs Crowe, Keelan, Bennett, Carthy also expressed their support for the proposal.

Cllr Maxwell proposed, Cllr McElvaney seconded

“ That the local property tax is left as is – ie no reduction ”

The Cathaoirleach indicated that he was putting Cllr McKenna’s proposal to the meeting.

A recorded vote was called for which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs Bennett, Carthy, Conlon, Crowe, Keelan, McKenna, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Total 8

Against: Cllrs Bannigan, Campbell, Gallagher, Maxwell, McElvaney, McNally, McPhillips and O’Hanlon.

Total 8

As the votes were tied, the Cathaoirleach stated that he was exercising his casting vote against the proposal. The vote therefore resulted in 8 for 9 against.

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal defeated. He ruled that it was not necessary to put Cllr Maxwell’s proposal to the meeting as the decision in relation to the adjustment of the LPT had been taken.

The meeting concluded at 1.50 pm.