

Minutes of Adjourned Statutory Budget Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Sliabh Beagh Hotel, Knockatallon on Monday 4th December, 2017 at 11.00 am.

Chair: Cllr C. Bennett, Cathaoirleach

Present: Cllrs. Aughey, Campbell, Carthy, Conlon, Connolly, Coyle, Crowe, Humphreys, Gilliland, Keelan, Maxwell, McKenna, McNally, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Mr. E. O'Sullivan, Chief Executive, Mr. P. Clifford, Director of Services, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, Ms. O. McConnon, Financial Management Accountant, Mr. C. Flynn, SE Water Services and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

Apology: Cllr McElvaney, Mr. A. King, Director of Service and Ms. P. Monahan, A/Director of Service.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed all present to the adjourned Statutory Budget meeting and invited Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance to present the budget for the remaining divisions to the members.

Mr. Murray then outlined the 2018 budget provision for the following division.

Division E – Environmental Protection

Matters raised by the members under this heading included the following -

- Leachate costs - €200,000 provided for transporting leachate from the Landfill to the MTWWTP for treatment and it was proposed to continue with this for the foreseeable future. Mr. Murray stated that the provision of funding for an Integrated Constructed Wetlands was discontinued in 2015 as this was not considered to be cost effective.

Division F – Recreation and Amenity

Mr. Murray outlined the budget provision for this division.

Matters raised by the members under this heading included the following

- Income from Monaghan Leisure Centre - The Chief Executive stated that the Council was currently going through a procurement process in relation to the future operation and management of the facility and explained that the current arrangement is working well.

Division G – Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare

Matters raised by the members under this heading included the following –

- Dog fouling – could the Council create more awareness to dog owners of their responsibilities when their dogs foul in public places. Mr. C. Flynn stated that the Council would prioritise this as an action when preparing the Annual Service Delivery Plan for 2018.

Division H – Miscellaneous Services

Under Division 8, a number of members expressed concern at the length of time it takes, particularly at weekends, to have a post mortem carried out following a sudden or unexplained death in the county. They also voice their dissatisfaction at the fact that the Council still had to pay for this service even though post mortems were no longer undertaken at Monaghan Hospital.

Cllr Maxwell declared an interest and did not take part in this discussion.

The Chief Executive explained that the provision for the Coroners Service was a statutory demand on the Council under the Coroners Acts. He undertook to provide members with a breakdown of the number of post-mortems undertaken in 2017 and the associated costs for a future meeting.

Cllr Conlon suggested that this matter should be raised by the Council's representatives at the HSE Forum. This was agreed

Proposals from previous Budget meeting:

Cllr B McKenna proposed, Cllr S. Conlon seconded

“ That line 25 in Support Services Expenditure – Maintenance of Networks and PC's is reduced from €1,030,864 to €930,864.

In response to this proposal Mr. Murray gave a detailed breakdown to the members of the budget provision of €1,030,864 for ICT. He stated that the service could not operate to the required standard if it were subjected to a cut of €100,000.

The Chief Executive stated that ICT underpins every service the Council provides across the Budget and he would be very concerned if the budget provision were to be reduced by €100k. He referred to the increased need for improved cyber security to minimise hacking risks and the new data protection legislation which was being implemented in 2018, which would bring severe penalties to the Council if personal information was mishandled or lost. A further member of staff for ICT was in the process of being recruited and the Chief Executive recommended that this service would not be cut.

Cllr Conlon stated that the block grant allocated to the Council by the Department did not recognise the catastrophic consequences that could befall the Council through the activities of hackers. He proposed the following motion -

Considering the significant increase of resources required by the ICT Section in challenging the omnipresent threat of hackers and additional demands on enhancing cyber security, throughout the Council organisation, that this Council writes to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government seeking commensurate increase in funding that should not be burdened by this county's ratepayers.

Cllr Crowe seconded the motion.

Following a lengthy discussion on the matter, to which a number of members contributed, Cllr McKenna indicated that he would amend his proposal to cut the ICT budget by €100,000 to €50,000, because of the staff provision that had been outlined by the Chief Executive.

The Cathaoirleach put Cllr McKenna's revised proposal to the members. A recorded vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs Bennett, Carthy, Conlon, Crowe, Keelan, McKenna and P. Treanor Total 7

Against: Cllrs Aughey, Campbell, Connolly, Coyle, Gilliland, Humphreys, Maxwell, McNally O'Hanlon and Treanor. Total 10

The Cathaoirleach declared the motion defeated.

Cllr O'Hanlon proposed, Cllr McNally seconded

"Small to Medium Enterprises in Co. Monaghan employ 90% of the workforces and a lot of these enterprises are in rural parts of the county creating invaluable jobs – agriculture and light industry. Based on the figures presented to us today for roads, it is proposed that, as a matter of urgency, a meeting takes place with the Taoiseach, the Minister for Enterprise and the Minister for Transport to highlight the chronic issues with our roads and the challenges of this with Brexit coming down the line.

This motion was agreed unanimously.

The members noted the email from Transport Infrastructure Ireland informing the Council of a proposed reduction of 30% in the national road ordinary maintenance allocation for 2018.

Cllr McNally proposed, Cllr O'Hanlon seconded

That this Council puts the outturn figure for 2017 into the roads budget as it is not possible to maintain our road network with a 30% reduction.

This motion was agreed unanimously.

Proposals relative to Budget adoption:

Mr. Murray then informed the members that there were three resolutions that required adoption by the Council before the conclusion of the meeting and these were referred to on Page 8 of the budget report.

(i) Base Year Adjustment:

Cllr McNally proposed, Cllr Aughey seconded that the Base Year Adjustment for the specified areas viz the former Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones and Monaghan Town Council areas shall be eliminated with effect from the passing of the within resolution and that accordingly no Base Year Adjustment for the specified areas viz the former Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones and Monaghan Town Council areas shall exist from the passing of this resolution.

The Cathaoirleach put the motion to the meeting and it was agreed unanimously.

(ii) Refund of rates on vacant commercial premises

On the proposal of Cllr O'Hanlon, seconded by Cllr McNally, it was agreed that the level of refund of rates on vacant commercial premises, that are available for rent or lease or are undergoing refurbishment, for the local financial year 2018 would be 100%.

(iii) Adoption of the Budget and the determination of the Annual Rate on Valuation:

Cllr Maxwell proposed,

That the Council adopt the draft Budget for 2017, as presented, and that the Annual Rate on Valuation for 2018 be determined at €57.63.

The Cathaoirleach called for a seconder for the motion, but none was forthcoming. There was no response from the floor after two further calls from the Cathaoirleach.

The Chief Executive asked the members why there was a difficulty in seconding the adoption of the budget.

In response, Cllr Conlon referred to the motion he had put forward earlier in the meeting. He said he would find it difficult to support a Budget when the Department did not provide the Council with resources to enhance their ICT security measures.

The Chief Executive stated that the Council had 14 days from the date of their original meeting to adopt a Budget and that time would expire on Thursday 7th December. If the Budget is not adopted by that date it becomes a matter for the Minister to deal with. He said that the only major issue raised over the two meetings was the issue of the reduction to the ICT budget.

Cllr McNally proposed a five minute adjournment so that the parties could consider the matter further.

Cllr Gilliland then stated that he wished to second the proposal of Cllr Maxwell to adopt the Budget and determine the Annual Rate on Valuation.

The Cathaoirleach put Cllr Maxwell's proposal to the meeting. A recorded vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. Aughey, Campbell, Carthy, Connolly, Coyle, Crowe, Humphreys, Gilliland, Keelan, Maxwell, McKenna, McNally, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.	Total 15
Against: Cllr Bennett.	Total 1
Abstained: Cllr Conlon.	Total 1

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal carried.

Cllr Conlon's proposal relating to funding by the Department for ICT costs was put to the members and agreed unanimously.

