

**Minutes of Statutory Budget Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Council Meeting Room, Mtek Building, Armagh Road, Monaghan on Thursday 23rd November, 2017 at 2.00 pm.**

**Chair:** Cllr C. Bennett, Cathaoirleach

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

Mr. E. O'Sullivan, Chief Executive, Mr. P. Clifford and Mr. A. King, Directors of Services, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, Ms. P. Monahan, A/Director of Service, Ms. O. McConnon, Financial Management Accountant, Ms. N. Woods, SEO Housing, Mr. J. McKernan, A/SE Roads, Ms. S. Boyle, A/SO Corporate Services and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

**Budget 2018:**

Mr. E. O'Sullivan, Chief Executive informed the members that he was obliged to present a balanced budget to the members. He said that it was not possible to balance the budget this year without the necessity to bring forward the harmonisation of commercial rates by two years and to have a minimum increased of 2.5% in the Annual Rate on Valuation. The draft budget provided for expenditure of €56.749 million to run the county in 2018 and provide the highest quality services possible. He also referred to the three year Capital Programme which provided for the infrastructure that the Council was trying to develop which was vital to the economic well-being of the county and the enhancement of community life. The programme includes a total of 61 projects which will require funding of €111.6 million over the three year period.

The Cathaoirleach invited the Head of Finance to outline the provisions of the Draft Budget for 2018 under the various divisions.

Mr. Murray stated that the Draft Budget for 2018 was based on a revised and harmonised Annual Rate on Valuation of €57.63 for the whole of the county. The revised ARV provides for the harmonisation of rates for the county as a whole by eliminating the base year adjustment for the former Town Council areas of Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Clones and Monaghan in the current year. He stated that the proposed ARV of €57.63 will still leave the Council's annual rate of valuation the third lowest in respect of the twenty five local authorities that have not been subject to revaluation.

Mr. Murray then proceeded to outline the provisions contained within the draft Budget under the various divisions.

**Division J – Support Services/Central Management Charge**

Mr. Murray outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2018 under this division. He indicated that these charges are apportioned across the other divisions.

Matters raised by the members under this division included the following:

- The cost of setting up a Procurement Unit within the Council.
- Pension and lump sum costs.
- Increased provision for ICT.

- County offices upkeep.
- Budget provision for relief staff.
- Loan charges former Clones Town Council building.
- The cost of renting office accommodation for Council staff and the long term impact of renting on Council finances, also the need to provide better facilities for the public accessing Council services, eg Planning Section.
- Gaeilge Programme and the need to make provision for Bliain na Gaeilge.
- Refurbishment of former Monaghan Town Council offices.
- Reform of Local Government – savings achieved from abolition of former Town Councils.
- Cost of Insurance premiums.

The Chief Executive and Head of Finance responded to the members queries.

*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.*

#### **Division A – Housing and Building:**

Mr. Murray outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2018 under this division.

Matters raised by the members under this division included the following:

- Housing rents
- Private rented inspection fees
- Acquisition of derelict sites for Council housing
- House purchase programme for 2018
- Loan charges
- Homelessness figures and provision of accommodation for homeless persons

Mr. Murray and Ms. Woods responded to the queries from the members.

#### **Division B – Roads Transport and Safety:**

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2018 under this division.

Matters raised by the members included the following:

- *LED lighting retrofit programme and the savings to be achieved.*
- *Public lighting costs*
- *School Warden scheme*
- *Road safety*
- *Salting of roads to ratepayers premises*

*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.*

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.*

### **Division C – Water Services:**

Mr. Murray informed the members that the net cost to the Council of the Water Services budget for 2018 was circa €51,114.

### **Division D – Development Management:**

Mr. Murray outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2018 under this division.

Matters raised by the members included the following:

- The appointment of a broadband officer was welcomed but the position requires support from the Department and broadband providers.
- LCDC – 60+ actions contained in the LECP – are these being implemented in full?
- Branding of County Monaghan.
- Provision of corporate gifts for visitors to the county.
- Creative Ireland programme
- Peace IV programme

The Head of Finance and Chief Executive responded to the queries from the members.

### **Adjournment of meeting:**

*On the proposal of Cllr Maxwell, seconded by Cllr Bennett, it was agreed that the meeting be adjourned until 11.00 a.m. on the 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2017 and that the meeting would be held in the Sliabh Beagh Hotel, prior to the December Council meeting.*

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Cathaoirleach**

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**Meetings Administrator**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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