

**COMHAIRLE BAILE MHUINEACHÁIN
MONAGHAN TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of Annual Statutory Budget Meeting of Monaghan Town Council held on Monday 16th December 2013 at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber of Monaghan Town Council, Town Hall, 1 Dublin Street, Monaghan.

Cathaoirleach: Cllr. Paul McGeown

Present: Cllrs. Mary Carroll, Seán Conlon, Robbie Gallagher, Thomas Hagan, David Maxwell, Donal Sherry, Seamus Treanor and Pádraigín Uí Mhurchadha

In attendance: Paul Clifford, Temporary County Manager, Dermot Deeney, Town Engineer, Marie Deighan, Town Clerk and Mary Hughes, Staff Officer.

Consideration of Draft Budget 2014

At the outset, Paul Clifford, Temporary County Manager referred to Circular FIN6/2013 dated 12th December 2013 in relation to the Local Government Fund General Purpose Grant Allocation 2014. The correspondence stated that the Local Government Fund for County Monaghan for the year 2014 is €10,247,882 and should be allocated to towns within the County by Monaghan County Council based on the needs and resources of each town. The correspondence also stated that the Minister is clear on the need for continued reductions in commercial rates over the coming years and requests that Local Authorities exercise restraint, or where possible, reduce commercial rates and local charges for 2014 in order to support competitiveness in the economy, nationally and locally and to protect the interests of communities. It was noted that the Draft Budget for Monaghan Town Council for 2014 was published on the 5th December 2013 prior to the announcement of the allocation of the Local Government Fund for 2014. The Temporary County Manager recommended that the entire Local Government Fund be retained by Monaghan County Council, the contribution from each Town Council towards domestic water and sewerage charges be removed and the County Charge for Monaghan Town Council be adjusted to account for the new funding model. It was noted that this will increase the overall funding allocation to Monaghan Town Council by €134,292 compared to 2013. It was further noted that the net effect of this recommendation is that the Draft Budget for Monaghan Town Council will be amended to provide for gross revenue expenditure of €5,026,969 (incorporating the County Demand of €1,504,206) and gross revenue income of €1,790,419, leaving an amount of €3,236,550 to be levied on rate payers resulting in a general rate in the pound of €69.14 – a reduction of 4%. It was noted that Monaghan town has the highest rate in the County - €72 compared to the County Council rate of €56.20.

The Members also noted figures which showed a downturn in pay-parking and rates income in the Town Council from the year 2006 to-date.

Cllr. Robbie Gallagher referred to reference in the Local Government Circular for the need to reduce rates and stated that a rates reform is needed.

Cllr. Seamus Treanor referred to an amount of €24,000 provided in the Budget for the Local Property Tax and €60,000 VAT for off-street pay parking which reduces the amount of funding which can be given to other organisations in the town to aid them in the great work that they do. Cllr. Seán Conlon stated that his Party are opposed to the Local Property Tax and its methodology and how it targets the vulnerable and those least able to pay.

Cllr. David Maxwell stated that Monaghan County Council have received an additional €2m in its Local Government Fund for 2014 according to figures circulated to Fine Gael Councillors by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. Paul Clifford, Temporary County Manager stated that he had received no such official notification.

Following a discussion, Cllr. Seán Conlon proposed and Cllr. Donal Sherry seconded that the following Motion be sent to Minister Phil Hogan, T.D.:-
“That this Council criticizes the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government for forwarding details of the 2014 budget to Fine Gael Councillors prior to forwarding the details to the Council Executive”.

Cllr. David Maxwell proposed and Cllr. Mary Carroll seconded that the General Rate in the pound be reduced by 4% to €69.14.

Cllr. Seán Conlon stated that he accepted entirely the need for a rate reduction but expressed concern at the cuts to some services made by the Budget Sub-Committee at their meeting on the 5th December 2013. Cllr. Conlon called on the Members to revisit the figures drawn up in the original draft budget on the 3rd December in the context of the new allocation of €134,292.

Cllr. Robbie Gallagher proposed that the meeting be adjourned until more information is received on the Local Government Fund which may have the potential to reduce rates even further than 4%. This proposal was seconded by Cllr. Seamus Treanor.

Cllr. Seán Conlon requested a five minute adjournment for his Party colleagues to consider the proposals made. This was agreed to.
The meeting then resumed.

Following a discussion a roll call vote was taken on Cllr. Maxwell’s proposal which resulted as follows:-

In favour of proposal:- Cllrs. Maxwell, Carroll (2)

Against the proposal:- Cllrs. Conlon, Gallagher, Hagan, McGeown, Sherry, Treanor, Uí Mhurchadha (7)

Cllr. Maxwell’s proposal was defeated.

A roll call vote was taken on Cllr. Gallagher's proposal which resulted as follows:-
In favour of proposal:- Cllrs. Carroll, Conlon, Gallagher, Hagan, Maxwell,
McGeown, Sherry, Treanor, Uí Mhurchadha (9)
Cllr. Gallagher's proposal was carried.

It was agreed to adjourn the Statutory Budget Meeting of Monaghan Town Council to 5.00pm on Wednesday 18th December 2013.

It was also agreed to hold a Budget Sub-Committee Meeting of Monaghan Town Council at 4.00pm on Wednesday 18th December 2013. All Members of the Town Council will be invited to attend.

This concluded the business of the Meeting.

Dated this the 20th day of January 2014.

Cathaoirleach