

Minutes of Statutory Budget Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Council Meeting Room, Mtek Building, Armagh Road, Monaghan on Tuesday 20th November 2018 at 2.00 pm.

Chair: Cllr D. Maxwell, Cathaoirleach

Present: Cllrs. Bennett, Campbell, Carthy, Conlon, Connolly, Crowe, Gilliland, Keelan, McElvaney, McKenna, McNally, O’Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Mr. E. O’Sullivan, Chief Executive, Mr. P. Clifford, Mr. A. King and Ms. P. Monahan, Directors of Services, Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance, Ms. O. McConnon, Financial Management Accountant and Ms. C. Thornton, Meetings Administrator.

Apology: Cllr Aughey.

At the outset the Cathaoirleach welcomed all present to the Statutory Budget meeting for 2019. He stated that a lot of hard work had gone into the preparation of the Draft Budget particularly by John Murray, Head of Finance and Olga McConnon, Financial Management Accountant. The Corporate Policy Group had held three meetings during the budget process on 16th and 24th October and 5th November. He further stated that since the draft Budget had issued, the IPB had notified the Council of the payment of a dividend of approximately €60,000. Following consultation with the CPG members, the Head of Finance had confirmed that this amount would be provided for the reduction of outstanding capital balances in accordance with the recommendation of the Local Government Auditor and the Audit Committee.

Budget 2019

The Chief Executive informed the members that he was obliged to present a balanced budget to the members. The draft Budget for 2019 as presented followed a statutory process. He stated that the Budget does its best to maintain and progress services for the people of the county for 2019. There are many examples of business expansion in the county this year and new businesses coming on stream. The Council had taken positive steps to address the blight of dereliction – in some cases addressing 30 years of decline. This Budget is about continuing that good work. ‘Brand Monaghan’ has never been stronger –as seen by the €50m development by Combilift and the official opening of Entekra to name just two of the companies that had expanded/developed this year and also the success of the Monaghan football team.

The 111 page narrative in the Budget report demonstrates the work being undertaken by the staff in accordance with the policies developed by the elected members. He looked forward to the continued support of the elected members in 2019 and commended the draft Budget to the Council.

In response to queries from the elected members in relation to the Budget commentary the Chief Executive and Head of Finance responded as follows:

- Buy & Renew and Repair/Lease Schemes – information on these schemes would be included as part of the Housing Presentation scheduled for the February 2019 Council meeting.
- A Workshop on the Homelessness Strategy would be delivered, in committee, to the elected members for the first hour of the January Council meeting.

- Regarding savings arising from the abolition of the Town Councils in 2014, he stated that there was consolidation and less duplication of services eg housing, planning and roads and other savings which benefit ratepayers.
- The traffic congestion on the N54 outside Monaghan town would be addressed as part of the Monaghan Land Use Transportation Study (LUTS) that is currently being finalised. It will make the case for an outer ring road that will alleviate this bottle neck.

The Cathaoirleach invited the Head of Finance to outline the provisions of the Draft Budget for 2019 under the various divisions.

Division A – Housing and Building:

Mr. Murray outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2019 under this division.

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon, seconded by Cllr Carthy it was agreed that the Housing Section include within the annual review form sent out to all Council housing applicants, a question to determine if the applicant seeks to remain as a current or active applicant seeking an allocation of a Council or Approved Housing Body owned property.

Division B – Roads Transport and Safety:

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2019 under this division.

Matters raised by the members included the following:

- *The reduction in funding for local roads over the past number of years*
- *The poor condition of local roads throughout the county*
- *The damage caused to local roads in the Magheracloone as a result of the closure of the R178 following the recent subsidence in the area.*
- *Public lighting and energy saving measures*
- *Additional charge points for electric vehicles in the county*
- *Poor quality of public lighting at Main Street, Carrickmacross and at the Dundalk Road junction in that town.*

The Head of Finance and relevant Director of Services responded to the matters raised.

Division C – Water Services:

Mr. Murray informed the members that the net cost to the Council of the Water Services budget for 2019 was circa €61,143 and related mainly to public conveniences and the administration of the Group Water Schemes.

Division D – Development Management

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2019 under this division.

Division E – Environmental Protection

Cllr McElvaney declared an interest in relation to this Division and withdrew from the meeting room.

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2019 under this division.

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

- Increased costs of bring bank collection from €1 per tonne to €22 per tonne.
- Glass recycling on a stretch of the N2 near Carrickmacross some years back – report sought on the success or otherwise of this initiative.
- Use of CCTV cameras at litter blackspots – particularly Donaghmoyne, near Mannan Castle.

The Head of Finance and relevant Director of Services responded to the matters raised.

On the proposal of Cllr Bennett, seconded by Cllr Maxwell, it was agreed that Monaghan County Council writes to the Department of the Environment requesting that a deposit return scheme (DRS) is introduced on all drinks containers (whether plastic, glass or metal) as this would encourage recycling.

Cllr McElvaney returned to the meeting room.

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

- Loan charges on Monaghan Leisure Centre/former Town Council Pool
- Library fines for unreturned books
- Open library project in Carrickmacross Library

Mr. Murray informed the members that when the Town Council element of the loan expired, the budget provision would be used to clear the debit balance inherited from Monaghan Town Council.

Mr. A. King responded to the matters raised in relation to the Library Service.

The Cathaoirleach congratulated Coral Leisure on receiving 'White Flag' status for 2018 and also Ciaran Murtagh, Monaghan Leisure Centre, on being awarded the 'Employee of the Year' title.

Division G – Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare

Mr. Murray outlined the budget provision for this division.

Division H – Miscellaneous Services

Mr. Murray outlined the budget provision for this division.

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

- Provision for members gratuities.
- Irrecoverable rates provision for 2019.
- Rates on vacant properties.
- General Data Protection Regulations - GDPR.
- Building rent – rent of circa €350K being paid for rented office space
- Provision of €100,000 for loan charges for new Council offices.

The Head of Finance and relevant Director of Services responded to the matters raised.

Proposals relative to Budget adoption:

Mr. Murray then informed the members that there were two 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) Refund of rates on vacant commercial premises

On the proposal of Cllr O’Hanlon, seconded by Cllr McElvaney, 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 2019 would be 100%.

Following a discussion on this matter it was agreed on the proposal of Cllr McNally, seconded by Cllr S. Treanor, that the Council give notice that it will introduce a change next year in the level of refund of rates on vacant commercial premises.

The members requested the Head of Finance to prepare a proposal for submission to the CPG/Council for consideration in February 2019.

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

Cllr Gilliland proposed, Cllr McKenna seconded

That the Council adopt the draft Budget for 2019, as presented, and that the Annual Rate on Valuation for 2019 be determined at €59.04.

In proposing the motion, Cllr Gilliland stated the adoption of the Draft Budget for 2019 was necessary so that the Council can support the 20 capital projects being progressed throughout the

county; the Town and Village Renewal Scheme; the CLÁR Programme; economic development and job creation and the County Development Plan 2019 – 2025.

A vote by show of hands on Cllr Gilliland's proposal resulted in 14 for, nil against. The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal carried.

The Chief Executive stated that the Capital Programme for the period 2019-2021 would be an item for discussion on the January agenda.

He also informed the members that an allocation of €421,000 had been announced earlier that afternoon in respect of Rossmore Park.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the members of the CPG, the Management Team and the Councillors for all the work undertaken in the preparation, consideration and approval of the Budget for 2019.

The Chief Executive concurred with the comments of the Cathaoirleach and especially thanked John Murray and Olga McConnon for their hard work in the budget preparation. He stated that he looked forward to working with the elected members to continue the delivery of quality services in 2019.

Vote of sympathy:

On the proposal of Cllr McElvaney, seconded by Cllr Gilliland it was agreed that the sympathy of the Council be extended to Siobhan Mallon, Water Services and Chris Mallon, Ballybay-Clones MD on the death of Siobhan's father, John Murnaghan, RIP.

The meeting then concluded.