

Minutes of Statutory Budget Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Council Meeting Room, Mtek Building, Armagh Road, Monaghan on Tuesday 19th November 2020 at 2.00 pm.

Chair: Cllr S. Coyle, Cathaoirleach

Present: Cllrs. Aughey, Bennett, Campbell, Carthy, Conlon, Connolly, Gilliland, Keelan, Kerr-Conlon, Maxwell, McCooey, McElvaney, McKenna, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor, S. Treanor and Truell

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

At the outset the Cathaoirleach welcomed all present to the Statutory Budget meeting for 2020. 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 and the Corporate Policy Group (CPG). The CPG had met on three occasions during the budget process on 15th and 24th October and 4th November.

Budget 2020

The Chief Executive stated that in accordance with the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the annual budget for 2020 had been prepared in consultation with the Council's Corporate Policy Group and provides for expenditure of €65,779,023 for the year ending 31st December 2020.

In framing the Revenue Budget for 2020 he had taken into consideration the views of the elected members, with a continued emphasis on a number of key areas of service delivery and activity which includes:

- The maintenance and improvement of key infrastructure and essential services
- The delivery of the Rebuilding Ireland Housing Capital Programme
- Regeneration and development of our rural towns and villages
- Economic and Enterprise development and job creation
- Marketing the County regionally, nationally and internationally

He added that the preamble to the Budget report demonstrates the work being undertaken by the staff in accordance with the policies developed by the elected members. In 2020, the Council will continue to prioritise the planning and delivery of a number of key capital projects. In accordance with the Local Government Act 2001 as amended, the three-year Capital Programme 2020-2022 is also circulated for noting by the elected members.

Considerable effort has been made by all members of the Council's Management Team and their staff to produce a Draft Budget that will ensure that the Council continues to provide high quality public services and develop infrastructure for the people of County Monaghan.

He thanked all involved with the preparation of the draft Budget 2020 and looked forward to the continued support of the elected members in 2020. He commended the draft Budget to the Council.

Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance gave a financial overview to the members. He explained that every local authority receives a minimum amount of funding under the LPT allocation process, known as the Baseline. Baselines have remained unchanged for a number of years and are linked to funding previously received as a General Purposes Grant in 2014. The baseline for Monaghan up to 2019 was €11,238,572. The baseline allocation for Monaghan County Council will increase for 2020 by €574,641 due to the decision of the Council to increase the base rate of LPT for the year. This increased funding is allocated directly to the Municipal Districts resulting in an allocation of €333,000 for each MD for 2020 compared to a MD allocation of €150,000 for each MD in 2019. He confirmed that the Local Property Tax allocation for Monaghan County Council for 2020 is €11,813,213.

Mr. Murray stated that the major item influencing the 2020 Budget was the impact of the revaluation of commercial rates valuations conducted by the Valuation Office during 2019. The revaluation was a reassessment of the rateable value of all properties in the local authority area at the same time, leading to a redistribution of the commercial rates burden between ratepayers. The revaluation resulted in the production of a new valuation list that contains modern valuations for all rateable properties in the County.

The revaluation is intended to be revenue neutral except for a provision of 0.9% for inflation and an allowance for leakage of rates that may arise as a result of appeals of valuations to the Valuation Tribunal. Allowance is also made for new valuations in the county outside of the revaluation process. Taking account of these items the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government issued a Rates Limitation Order (RLO) for the County which determined the ARV that is to be applied. The ARV for Monaghan County Council for 2020 determined in accordance with the RLO is 0.2260. The RLO only applies in a year when a revaluation is undertaken.

He also gave details of the Council's current financial position stating that the deficit at 31st December 2018 was €2,300,467. Although the deficit is being reduced it remains a significant concern for the Council.

In preparing the budget consideration had to be given to the amount of potential leakage of rates from appeals to the Valuation Tribunal that is contained in the RLO. The amount for leakage contained in the RLO is €538,000. This amount will have to be transferred to Capital Account to provide a fund from which any refunds that may arise as a result of reductions in valuations from appeals to the Tribunal. This amount is included in the irrecoverable rates provision of €2,538,000 contained in the budget.

He stated that having regard to estimated gross expenditure and income for 2020 the annual rate on valuation would be 0.2260.

The Chief Executive and Head of Finance responded to queries from the members in relation to the preamble to the Budget 2020.

The Cathaoirleach invited the Head of Finance to outline the provisions of the Draft Budget for 2020 under the various divisions.

Division A – Housing and Building:

Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2020 under this division.

Matters raised by the members included the following:

- *Homeless presentations*
- *Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme*
- *Figures on Housing Waiting list*

Mr. J. Murray, Director of Housing responded to the matters raised.

Division B – Roads Transport and Safety:

Mr. J. Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2020 under this division.

Matters raised by the members included the following:

- *The figure for Council own resources for Roads*
- *Winter road maintenance - need to salt areas outside schools*
- *The promotion of the Community Involvement Scheme*
- *Traffic management on the N54.*

Ms. P. Monahan, 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 2020 was circa €165,000 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 2020 under this division.

Matters raised by the members included the following:

- Refundable deposits – Planning
- Peace IV – Is there a successor Programme (Peace +)

On the proposal of Cllr Campbell, seconded by Cllr McElvaney, it was agreed that there would be a presentation on what has been achieved in Co. Monaghan under the Peace IV Programme when the Programme ended.

Cllr McCooley referred to the presentation by the Down Syndrome Monaghan Branch at a recent Council meeting and enquired why funding hadn't been provided in the Budget 2020 for the group. The Chief Executive stated that the matter had been considered by the CPG and it was recommended that the Group could make application to the Community Development Fund.

After further discussion it was agreed on the proposal of Cllr McKenna, seconded by Cllr Carthy that the Executive would identify an area from within the 2019 Budget with a view to making a once off allocation of €5,000 to the Monaghan Branch of Down Syndrome Ireland.

Mr. Murray confirmed that the situation in relation to Refundable Deposits is currently being reviewed. The Local Government Auditor requested that any surplus arising would be used to reduce unfunded capital balances.

Division E – Environmental Protection

Cllr McElvaney declared an interest in relation to the waste management element of this Division and withdrew from the meeting.

Mr. John Murray, Head of Finance outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2020 under this division.

Regarding the treatment of leachate from the landfill at Scotch Corner, Mr. Murray stated that the Council had negotiated a reduced fee for leachate treatment with Irish Water. It was anticipated that the fee would reduce from €3.80 per m³ to €1.10 per m³. The members welcomed the proposed reduction in costs for leachate treatment.

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

- Successful mattress recycling initiative.
- Illegal dumping of waste tyres
- Diesel laundering
- Use of CCTV cameras at litter blackspots

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

Cllr McElvaney returned to the meeting when the Waste Management budget had been completed

On the proposal of Cllr Connolly, seconded by Cllr S. Treanor, it was agreed that in view of the success of the Mattress Recycling Initiative for 2019, that Monaghan County Council calls on the Department of Climate Change and Environment to re-instate this grant for 2020.

Division F – Recreation and Amenity

Mr. Murray outlined the budget provision for this division.

Mr. Murray explained that the provision for the former Town Council loan charges on the Monaghan Leisure Centre was being retained to reduce the capital balance of €700,000 inherited from Monaghan Town Council for the facility.

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 –

- Rates Alleviation Scheme
- Vacant properties/vacancy relief
- NPPR anticipated income
- Coroners – issue of delays in post mortems being undertaken at weekends
- Cost of insurance premiums.

The Head of Finance responded to the matters raised.

On the proposal of Cllr Connolly, seconded by Cllr S. Treanor, it was agreed that, in view of the allocation of resources from Monaghan County Council on an annual basis for the Coroners Budget that Monaghan County Council –

- (a) Calls on the Minister for Justice and the Coroners for County Monaghan to ensure that a weekend post mortem service is provided in the event of deaths, sudden or otherwise at weekends and*
- (b) Further calls on the Minister for Justice to review the provision of funding for the Coroners Service where this becomes a charge on Monaghan County Council.*

On the proposal of Cllr Conlon, seconded by Cllr Carthy it was agreed that in anticipation of the publication of the Moorehead Report initiated by Government to review pay and allowances for Councillors, that this Council writes to Minister for Local Government John Paul Phelan, Minister for Finance Paschal Donohoe and the City and County Managers Association stating our opposition to any funding being drawn down from Council's own resources in the event of an increase in salary for Councillors and that we insist any potentially required additional funding is provided for through State Exchequer Funds.

That this Motion is forwarded to LAMA and AILG and all Local Authorities.

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 McCooey, 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 2020 would be 100%.

The members requested that a Working Group is set up to examine Vacancy Relief and the Rates Alleviation Scheme in advance of the budget being prepared for 2021. This was agreed.

(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 2020, as presented, and that the Annual Rate on Valuation for 2020 be determined at €0.2260.

A recorded vote on Cllr Gilliland's proposal resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. Aughey, Bennett, Campbell, Carthy, Conlon, Connolly, Coyle, Gilliland, Keelan, Kerr-Conlon, McCooey, McElvaney, McKenna, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor and S. Treanor.

Against: Cllrs Connolly, McElvaney and S. Treanor.

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal carried.

Capital Programme 2020 – 2022

The members noted that the Capital Report 2020 – 2022 had been circulated. The Chief Executive stated that the Capital Programme would be an item for discussion on the January agenda.

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 2020.

The Chief Executive concurred with the comments of the Cathaoirleach and especially thanked John Murray and Olga McConnon for their hard work in the preparation of the Draft Budget. He stated that he looked forward to working with the elected members to continue the delivery of quality services in 2020.

Votes of sympathy:

It was agreed that the sympathy of the Council be extended to the following:

- *The wife and family of the late Peadar Morgan, Listinny, Clontibret, former Wildlife Ranger.*
- *Damien Stirratt, Council employee on the death of his brother Roy, RIP late of Scotstown.*

Offices Working Group:

Cllr Connolly informed the meeting that he no longer wished to be a member of the Office Accommodation Working Group.

On the proposal of Cllr Coyle, seconded by Cllr O'Hanlon, it was agreed that Cllr McElvaney would be nominated to replace Cllr Connolly on the Office Accommodation Working Group.

December Council meeting:

At the Cathaoirleach's request it was agreed that the December Council meeting would be held in the Peace Link in Clones. The meeting would commence at 2pm. The Cathaoirleach stated that if

any member wished to have a tour of the facility, they could assemble at 12.45 pm at the facility to avail of this opportunity. He invited all

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Meetings Administrator

Date: _____
