

Minutes of Statutory Budget Meeting of Monaghan County Council held in the Council Chamber, Mtek on Friday, 19 November 2024 at 10.00am

Chair: Cllr C. Bennett, Cathaoirleach

Present: Cllrs Campbell, Carthy, Clerkin, S. Conlon, Flynn, Gibbons, Gilliland, Keelan, Maxwell, McAree, O'Hanlon, P. Treanor, S. Treanor and Truell

Apologies: Cllr S Coyle

Via Teams: Cllr Aughey, P. Conlon

Mr. R. Burns, Chief Executive, Mr. C. Flynn, Ms. P. Monahan, Ms. Carmel O'Hare, Ms. O. McConnon, Directors of Services, Mr. G. McMahon, A/Directors of Services, Meetings Administrator, Ms. M McGarvey

The Chief Executive welcomed all present to the Statutory Budget meeting for 2025. Mr Burns stated that the budget being presented today reflects a proposed expenditure of €94 million which is a 5% increase on Budget 2024.

Mr Burns stated that the budget package is one that supports capital and economic investment into the future, provides for high quality public services and sustainable development of our businesses and communities. This budget demonstrates that as a council we are focused on delivering services, maintaining our roads, meeting our climate action objectives, supporting social, cultural, economic and tourism development and managing finances in a prudent manner while also investing in and planning for the future. There are some significant expenditures, including the Peace Campus, but this is a county wide asset that in a few years will be in a cost neutral position. From a balanced County perspective, there is a provision for a swimming pool and leisure complex in Carrickmacross, depending on the results of the feasibility study. We are investing in our Community Development teams employing more Community officers, one will be assigned to each Municipal District (MD).

Mr Burns concluded by thanking Olga McConnon, Director of Finance; Johanna McKenna, Financial Management Accountant; the Corporate Policy Group (CPG); Executive and staff for their work in preparing the draft Budget.

Budget 2025

Ms O McConnon, Director of Finance outlined the main salient points of Budget 2025:

- €4.1m budget increase year on year
- Transfer to capital €600k budget 2025 (€100k 2024)
- Swimming pool Carrickmacross provision €300k
- New office provision €1.5m budget 2025 (increase of €400k)
- Peace Campus running costs (€1.2m, income €740k), €200k increase to budget
- Public sector pay deal grant €6.1m 2025 (€4.2m budget 2024)
- Increase in pensions, underfunded in 2024 (€4.9m budgeted vs. expected €5.3m actual), budgeting €5.4m for 2025
- Additional Payroll costs – new staff (funded €700k/unfunded €1m), Public sector pay deal €1m, increments €300k)

- Maternity leave budget €150k
- Rates – Global revaluation €400k, New valuations €800k, ARV 3% increase (€480k)
- Retained Fire Officers – the additional cost is material, it will not all be offset by DHLGH grant (€250k estimate shortfall)
- Rent additional income c.€1.0m
- 15% increase in LPT equates to €286k MD allocation.
- Vacant property write off (80% in 2023 & 2024)
- Bank overdraft costs €100K. (€600k transfer to capital provision to address this)
- Housing adaptation grants €100k decrease (15% match funding down from 20%)
- €10k NPPR income (€30k reduction/ends 31.03.2025)
- Increased cost of business grant – review of Power Up grant is underway, may be additional payments in 2025
- Vets (FSAI) – Transfer to DoA expected, additional cost of €100k.

‘On the proposal of Cllr C Bennett, seconded by Cllr C. Carthy it was agreed to write to the Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage (‘DHLGH’) and request that the extra spend of €1.2m is covered by the DHLGH. Retained Fire Officers need to be supported in their role, the Government departments need to cover this and not Monaghan County Council (MCC)’.

The CE noted that Monaghan Co Co is not alone on this and the Chief Executives from all local authorities are doing what they can through the LGMA and CCMA to get more support.

Ms McConnon proceeded to outline the provisions of the Draft Budget for 2025 under the various divisions.

Division A – Housing and Building

Ms McConnon outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2025 under this division. She highlighted the following:

- *Response Maintenance increased by €50k due to an increase in the number of social houses in ownership (1,850 houses)*
- *€6.8m income in housing rents*
- *Costs of housing of the homeless (€200k) is 90% recoupable*
- *8 staff funded under ‘Housing for All’ programme*
- *Housing Affordable Administration Costs is due to 1 member of staff, which is fully funded.*
- *RAS administration income increased.*
- *HAP Place Finder Service has a new staff member which is 90% funded.*

Division B – Roads Transport and Safety:

Ms McConnon outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2025 under this division. She stated that the grant allocation for 2024 forms the basis for the 2025 budget as allocations are not announced until February 2025. These are all fully funded programmes.

- *Increase in new public lighting increasing from €60k to €80k*
- *ZEV (Zero Emission Vehicle Ireland) is for a new staff member (Senior Executive Engineer post), which will be fully funded.*
- *€600k pay parking income is ringfenced.*

- *5% increase in Roads maintenance from our own resources.*

Matters raised by the members included the following:

- Public Lighting deficits – members raised concerns in relation to the deterioration of lights on the main street of Carrickmacross. Ms G McMahon, A/Director of Roads, responded to the matters raised. The issue with the public lighting will be addressed through the SPC's.

Division C – Water Services:

Ms McConnon noted that with the service moving over to Uisce Éireann, staff numbers are decreasing so staff costs are reducing. Central management costs are now funded by the Department (DHLGH). Defrayment of central management costs are guaranteed until the end of 2026. Rural Water still has 4-5 staff, which are fully funded.

Division D – Development Management

Ms McConnon outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2025 under this division. She highlighted the following:

- *Forward Planning – 2 staff, fully funded*
- *Reconfiguration of Community Staff, there will be a Community Development Officer in each Municipal District*
- *Community Safety Partnership – fully funded, the increase is due to staff costs*
- *Peace Plus Programme - €4.5m over 3 years allocated to Monaghan County Council*
- *Integration support costs – fully funded staff costs*
- *Town Regeneration, 8 staff. We get €5k per property that we activate.*
- *Heritage/Biodiversity Officer – 75% funded, €100k for action plan*
- *Creative Ireland Programme has been very successful, hope to get €250k for 2025*

Division E – Environmental Protection

Ms McConnon outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2025 under this division. She highlighted the following:

- *Landfill – no significant changes*
- *Sweeping and Scavenging - €50k increase*
- *Retained Fire Service – hope to recoup majority of increased costs*
- *Climate - 4 staff, 3 fully funded*

Matters raised by the members included the following:

- *Amount of money spent on 'Sweeping and Scavenging' (€925k)*
- *Number of Litter fines imposed*

The Chief Executive, Ms McConnon and Ms Monahan responded to the matters raised.

Division F – Recreation and Amenity

Ms McConnon outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2025 under this division. She highlighted the following:

- *€300k provision included for the proposed new swimming pool in Carrickmacross*
- *Library – 2 new libraries in the County (Monaghan and Castleblaney) and hoping to restore the new building in Ballybay for an additional library.*
- *€66k funding for Archivist to manage records for the County.*
- *Increased maintenance provision for playgrounds, approx. 30 playgrounds now in Monaghan.*
- *€1.2m provision for the Peace Campus*
- *Arts office – no material change*
- *Patrick Kavanagh Exhibition Centre – the increase is for a provision for extra staff*
- *Town Events – a lot more events and festivals taking place.*

Matters raised by the members included the following:

- *Libraries – ‘Open Library’ service in Monaghan town library*
- *Festivals budgeted allocation per Municipal District*

The Chief Executive and Ms O McConnon responded to queries raised.

Division G – Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare

Ms McConnon outlined the proposed expenditure and income provision for 2025 under this division.

- *Vet will transfer to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine from 01 January 2025. Provision made for residual work that will remain in the remit of Monaghan Co Council. The Vet was fully funded and administration support was 75% funded.*
- *Dog Warden Service - Extra funding provision for some of the work the vet would have done regarding dogs. Still awaiting notification on allocation for staffing resources.*

The Chief Executive, Ms O McConnon and Ms P Monahan responded to queries raised.

Division H – Miscellaneous Services

Ms McConnon outlined the budget provision for this division and highlighted the following:

- *Irrecoverable rates -reduced provision of €166k as collection rates are very high*
- *Motor Tax provision reduced as a result of reduction in staff numbers (reduced to 5)*
- *Transfer to Capital Account - €600k provision will help fund historical balances and improve cashflows.*
- *FEMPI grant income for Lansdown Road Compensation (€6.1m) welcomed*
- *NPPR income will be eliminated from 2026 onwards*

Division J – Central Management Charges

Ms McConnon explained and outlined the apportionment of the Central Management Charge across all budgets. She stated that the overall cost of support services – HR, Finance, IT is €16.8 million.

Ms McConnon referred to the following:

- Mtek – increased rental costs due to taking on more office space
- New Offices provision €1.5m for 2025
- IT service - €100k increase
- MD costs increased due to new traffic wardens for Ballybay-Clones and Castleblayney-Carrickmacross
- Additional staff in HR, Finance,
- Pensions - additional budget €500k in 2024

Ms McConnon responded to the matters raised.

The Cathaoirleach commended Carmel O’Hare, Director of Service for her work on ‘MyCoCo’

Proposals relative to Budget adoption:

Ms McConnon 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) Abatement of rates in respect of vacant properties for the financial year ending 31 December 2025

On the proposal of Cllr C Carthy, seconded by Cllr S Conlon, 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 2025 would be 80%.

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

On the proposal of Cllr A Campbell, seconded by Cllr P Treanor, it was agreed that the Draft Budget for 2025, as presented, be adopted and that the Annual Rate on Valuation for 2025 be determined at €0.2518

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal in relation to the adoption of the Budget for 2025 carried.

3. To consider recommendations and minutes from Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 08 October 2024 October 2023 and 13 November 2023.

The members noted the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meetings held on 08 October which had been circulated.

On the proposal of Cllr R Truell, seconded by Cllr C Carthy, it was agreed that the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meetings held on 08 October 2024 and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

4. To consider recommendations and minutes from Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 29 October 2024.

The members noted the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meetings held on 29 October which had been circulated.

On the proposal of Cllr C Bennett, seconded by Cllr S Conlon, it was agreed that the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group meetings held on 29 October 2024 and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

5. Capital Programme 2024– 2026

The members noted that the Capital Report 2025-2027 had been circulated along with the Budget report. Mr C Flynn, Director of Services stated that the Capital Programme would be an item for discussion on the January/February 2025 Council 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 2025. Cllr Bennett congratulated Ms McConnon and Ms McKenna on the delivery of the statutory budget.

The meeting then concluded.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Meetings Administrator

Date: _____
