

MINUTES OF ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING OF DONEGAL
COUNTY COUNCIL, ADJOURNED FROM 11TH JANUARY 2008,
HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON 18TH JANUARY
2008

C/09/08

MEMBERS PRESENT

Clrs. J. Boyle, Mayor, D. Alcorn, L. Blaney, A. Bonner, E. Bonner, C. Brogan, B. Byrne, F. Conaghan, G. Crawford, P. Doherty, M.T Gallagher, J. Kelly, J. Kennedy, D. Larkin, N. Mc Bride, T. McDaid, M. Mc Donald, S. McEniff, I. McGarvey, D. Mc Gonagle, P. Mc Gowan, B. Mc Guinness, P. Mac Lochlainn, T. Pringle, T. Slowey

C/10/08

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Michael McLoone, County Manager, Mr. Aidan Mc Nicholas, Head of Finance, Mr. L. Kelly, Assistant County Manager, Director of Housing, Mr. Francie Coyle, Director of Planning and Economic Development, Mr. John Mc Laughlin, Director Roads and Transportation, Mr Michael Heaney, Director Community, Culture and Enterprise, Mr. Sean Sheridan, Director Corporate Services, Mr. Peadar Mc Rory, A/Director Water, Environment and Emergency Services, Mr. Bartley Mc Glynn, Senior Executive Officer, Mr. James Boyle, Senior Engineer, Mr. Pheilim Crossan, Project Accountant, Mr. Garry Martin, Senior Executive Officer, Mr. Eunan Sweeney, Meetings Administrator, Ms Anne Marie Quinn, Administrative Officer, Ms Pauline Smyth, Assistant Accountant, Mr. Garry Martin, Senior Executive Officer, , Mr. Eunan Sweeney, Meetings Administrator, Ms. Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer, Corporate Services. Ms Donna Rodgers , Clerical Officer.

C/11/08

ADJOURNMENTS

Following the calling of the meeting to order by the Mayor it was resolved on the proposal of Clr. Conaghan, seconded by Clr. Mc Eniff to adjourn the meeting until 4.00pm to allow the County Manager and the Head of Finance meet with members to further consider budgetary issues.

When the meeting resumed, it was resolved, on the proposal of Clr. Conaghan, seconded by Clr. Slowey to further adjourn the meeting until 5.00pm.

On resumption, on the proposal of Clr. Doherty, seconded by Clr. Byrne, it was resolved that the meeting be further adjourned until 5.15pm to enable the completion of ongoing discussions.

C/12/08

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Clrs. Donaghey, Harte, Reid and O' Neill who were unable to attend the meeting.

C/13/08

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

The Mayor, Clr. Boyle thanked all members and staff for their patience and commitment to the budgetary process. Reminding members of the time constraints involved, he advised that contributions would be taken from the representatives of the individual political groupings on Donegal County Council.

C/14/08

ADOPTION OF BUDGET

Clr. Conaghan proposed, seconded by Clr. Slowey that:

- (1) The proposed increase of 5% in Commercial Rates be reduced to 3% resulting in a total expenditure reduction of €58,534.
The combined cost of this reduction to be offset as follows:
 - €300,000 reduction in the provision for Housing Grants.
 - €50,000 reduction in the provision for bad and doubtful debts.
 - €5,534 reduction in the provision for Irrecoverable Rates.
- (2) A total of €1,100,000 be ringfenced from the Road Works Programme – (Own Resources) provision of €4.2million and distributed on an electoral area basis to deal with items 1 – 17 listed under the provision for Road Maintenance and Area Offices –Ref 2.2 Page 41 Budget Book.
- (3) A Pilot Project be undertaken to measure the cost effectiveness of pothole repair.

- (4) The County Manager refrain from signing the Manager's Order in respect of the 26% increase in Water Charges until such time as clarification had been provided to Members on a range of issues raised, and further discussion had taken place.

Clr. Slowey stated that there would have to be a tight rein kept on finances during 2008. He called for an appropriate regime to be put in place to allow Donegal County Council broaden its revenue base.

Clr. Mac Lochlainn stated that the commercial rate sector were once again having to pay the price, and that, as in previous years, no attempt had been made to try and increase the revenue base.

The motion was put to the meeting by the Mayor and a recorded vote taken by the Meetings Administrator.

The vote resulted in 21 votes for with 3 abstentions.

Those voting in favour were:

Clrs. J. Boyle, Mayor, D. Alcorn, L. Blaney, A. Bonner, E. Bonner, C. Brogan, B. Byrne, F. Conaghan, G. Crawford, P. Doherty, J. Kelly, J. Kennedy, D. Larkin, N. Mc Bride, M. Mc Donald, I. McGarvey, D. Mc Gonagle, P. Mc Gowan, B. Mc Guinness, T. Pringle, T. Slowey. (21)

Clrs Gallagher, Mc Daid and Mac Lochlainn abstained.

The Mayor declared the motion carried

On the proposal of Clr. Conaghan, seconded by Clr. Slowey, it was resolved:-

“ That Donegal County Council hereby adopt for the Financial year ended 31st December, 2008, the Budget set out in Tables A and B resulting in an Annual Rate in Valuation of €74.46, as shown in Table B, and the Budget of money demanded for the Town of Ballyshannon, as set out in Table C resulting in an Annual Rate in Valuation of €3.46, as shown in Column 7 of Table C.

C/15/08 DETERMINATION OF THE ANNUAL RATE ON VALUATION

On the proposal of Clr. Conaghan, seconded by Clr. Slowey it was resolved:-

“That Donegal County Council hereby determine in accordance with the budget now adopted, the rates set out in:

Table B	=	€74.46
Column (7) of Table C	=	€3.46

to be the Annual Rate in Valuation to be levied for the year ended 31st December, 2008 for the purpose set out in Table B and in Table C”

C/16/08 COUNTY CHARGE

On the proposal of Clr. Conaghan, seconded by Clr. McGuinness it was resolved:-

“ That the sums set forth hereunder be demanded from the Town Councils by way of County Charge for the services of the year ended 31st December, 2008

Buncrana	€25,994
Bundoran	€29,794
Letterkenny	€2,085,000”

Clr. Pringle expressed concern in relation to the ongoing privatisation of works for a number of water and sewerage schemes and suggested that it would not be any more cost effective and would result in increased costs for the commercial sector. He contended that the problem for Donegal County Council was not its ability to strike a rate but rather the need to expand its revenue base.

C/17/08 RESPONSE BY COUNTY MANAGER/DIRECTOR OF SERVICES TO ISSUES RAISED

On the proposal of Clr. Conaghan, seconded by Clr. Mc Gowan, it was resolved that the County Manager and the Director of Roads and Transportation would provide further clarification on matters raised.

The County Manager agreed to follow up with the Housing Directorate and the HSE in relation to the transfer of the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme, and noted that the projected transfer date to the Local Authority may now be deferred.

He agreed also to follow up on rent and annuity collection.

In response to the Councils request, the County Manager agreed to defer signing the Manager's Order in relation to Water Charges until such time as there has been further consultation with members on a number of issues raised within the context of Budget 2008 discussions.

Responding to queries on the possibility of mitigating the impact of the 35% increase in water charges, he confirmed that the overall impact of the 26% increase for 2008 would result in customers paying 5c more than they did in 2005. He agreed to report back to members on the issue of combined metering.

Mr. John Mc Laughlin, Director Roads and Transportation clarified that €1.1million would be ringfenced to provide selective maintenance in each Electoral Area.

The Public Lighting / Town and Village Programme would, he confirmed, be rolled out in March. The Director of Service and the Senior Executive Engineer in each Electoral Area would, he advised, follow up on the on the progress of the programme.

Mr. Mc Laughlin advised that there would be a combined effort by both the Planning and the Water and Environment Directorates to tackle water and drainage issues through:

- Planning enforcement
- Tackling of piping issues.
- Arrangement of meetings with the I.F.I.
- Prioritisation of maintenance monies in each Electoral Area.

The piloting of a Pilot Pothole Repair Programme would also be effectively advanced.

This concluded the business of the meeting.