

**MINUTES OF STATUTORY BUDGET MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD, CO. DONEGAL ON
FRIDAY 13TH JANUARY, 2006 AT 10.00 a.m. FOR THE PURPOSE OF
ADOPTING A BUDGET AND DETERMINING THE ANNUAL RATE ON
VALUATION FOR THE SERVICES OF THE LOCAL FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING
31ST DECEMBER, 2006**

C/01/06 MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllr Dessie Larkin, Cathaoirleach	Cllr J.J. Reid
Cllr Liam Blaney	Cllr David Alcorn
Cllr Enda Bonner	Cllr Alice Bonner
Cllr Ciaran Brogan	Cllr John Boyle
Cllr Gerry Crawford	Cllr Francis Conaghan
Cllr Padraig Doherty	Cllr Brendan Byrne
Cllr Rena Donaghey	Cllr Pearse Doherty
Cllr Jonathan Kennedy	Cllr Jimmy Harte
Cllr Noel McBride	Cllr Tony McDaid
Cllr Denis McGonagle	Cllr Ian McGarvey
Cllr Patrick McGowan	Cllr Brian O'Domhnaill
Cllr Bernard McGuinness	Cllr Thomas Pringle
Cllr Padraig MacLochlainn	Cllr Terence Slowey
Cllr Barry O'Neill	

C/02/06 OFFICIALS PRESENT

Mr Michael McLoone, County Manager
Mr Aidan McNicholas, Head of Finance
Mr Liam Kelly, ACM & Director of Services, Housing/Building
Mr Michael Heaney, Director of Services, C, C & E
Mr John G McLaughlin, Director of Services, Roads & Transportation
Mr Jim Holohan, Director of Services, Water/Env/Emergency
Mr Francie Coyle, Director of Services, Planning/Economic Dev.
Mr Sean Sheridan, Director of Services, Corporate Services
Mr Joe Peoples, Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Services
Mr Bartley McGlynn, Senior Executive Officer, Finance
Mr Phelim Crossan, Project Accountant, Finance
Ms Anne Marie Quinn, Administrative Officer, Finance
Mr Bernard McNeely, Administrative Officer, Finance
Ms Marie Quinn, Assistant Staff Officer, Finance
Ms Donna Rodgers, Clerical Officer, Finance

C/03/06 APOLOGIES

Cllr Sean McEniff
Cllr Marion McDonald

C/04/06

CATHAOIRLEACH'S ADDRESS

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr Dessie Larkin, opened the Budget Meeting for 2006 and welcomed all in attendance. The Cathaoirleach presented the format for the Budget Meeting which had been agreed with the County Manager.

1. Presentation by Head of Finance
2. Presentation by County Manager
3. Initial responses from the Party Whips
4. Adjournment to allow Party meetings to take place

On resumption each Member would be given an opportunity to speak.

C/05/06

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY

A minute's silence was observed in memory of Cllr. Reid's brother, Mr Neil Reid, Main Street Stranorlar.

C/06/06

HEAD OF FINANCE'S PRESENTATION

Mr Aidan McNicholas presented to the meeting, for consideration, a very detailed presentation of the contents of the 2006 Draft Budget and advised that the 3 year Capital Programme was also included in the Draft Budget.

The Head of Finance thanked Members for attending the meeting and all staff for their help in preparing the Draft Budget for 2006.

C/07/06

COUNTY MANAGER'S PRESENTATION

The County Manager made a detailed presentation by Directorate followed by the Financial Summary and Recommendations to the Meeting on the Draft Budget for 2006.

He outlined the four major objectives of the overall Budgetary Strategy:

1. To improve the level and standard of maintenance of our existing infrastructure and services.
2. To remedy deficits in our physical and economic infrastructure (by increasing capital investment) to cater for existing demand and future developments.
3. To continue with the programme of reform and modernisation of Council services within the wider agenda of Public Service Reform/Delivering Better Government.
4. Promote the economic, social and cultural developments of the County in partnership with other State Agencies, the private sector, the community and voluntary sector and other social partners.

The County Manager thanked all those involved in the preparation of Budget Report and recommended the Draft Budget be adopted by the Council.

C/08/06

CATHAOIRLEACH'S RESPONSE

The Cathaoirleach complimented (with respect to the presentations made) the County Manager and Head of Finance and commented on the great detail presented.

RESPONSES FROM PARTY WHIPS

Cllr Francis Conaghan

Cllr Conaghan complimented the County Manager and Head of Finance for the detailed work on the Budget. He pointed out that further meetings would take place in the near future to discuss the 3 Year Capital Programme and its implications for the proposed Development Contribution Scheme.

Cllr. Conaghan requested the following information:

- (a) Breakdown of Other Receipts in the sum of €35,790,673. There is a need to look at the headings within this to determine what discretion there is under headings such as Planning Income, etc.
- (b) Is the balance of the Housing Rent increased income, after funding the Housing Maintenance costs, being used to fund other cost headings in the Housing Directorate?
- (c) Under what headings can the €2m from Development Levies in the Roads Directorate be spent on? Does drainage qualify?
- (d) Improved service needed from ESB in view of increases.
- (e) Agreement must be reached on how the additional Own Resources of €660,000 in Roads is to be spent following on from the content of the County Manager's presentation.
- (f) Details of the make up of the €210,000 included under the heading 'Purchase of Water from Northern Ireland'
- (g) What is the current position on the Water Conservation Programme?
- (h) Staff in C, C & E are to brief all Members in full in regard to meetings and discussion they are having with all Community Groups and media correspondence.
- (i) Directors should answer all queries in respect of their services at the meeting.

Cllr Terence Slowey

Cllr Slowey complimented the Head of Finance and the County Manager on their very detailed presentations. He made the following comments:

- (a) The Loan Charges provision of €703,300 under the Waste Management heading could be reduced if the Department were to provide more funding?

- (b) Increases proposed total approximately €1.8m. Fine Gael party is concerned about the increases as they do not want to impact negatively on employment and on the small businesses in the county.
- (c) Welcomes the Indecon report and hopes that it has taken into account the good suggestions made by Donegal County Council over a number of years.
- (d) Revenue base needs to be broadened.

Cllr Pearse Doherty

Cllr Doherty complimented the presentations from the Head of Finance and the County Manager.

Cllr Doherty raised the following matters:

- (a) Details of the additional €660,000 under Own Resources in Roads
- (b) Donegal International Airport needs an additional €10,000 over and above the amount included in the Draft Budget
- (c) Allocation of €20,000 for the Dyslexia Association should be divided amongst all groups in the county.
- (d) Details of Administration costs listed on page 31 of blue pages.
- (e) Details of the increase in Support Services
- (f) Calculation used to arrive at Net Effective Valuation amount of €259,367
- (g) Big variations on tonnage estimated each year when compared to actual for the year.
- (h) Movement in % of Income from Government Grants:
 - 2004 - 65%
 - 2005 - 63%
 - 2006 - 61%
 ½% would yield approximately €800,000 which would eliminate any need for a rate increase.
- (i) Provision of €5,000 to cover translation costs under the Official Languages Act will not be adequate.

Cllr Liam Blaney

Cllr complimented the presentations.

Cllr Blaney asked for the following:

- (a) List options where savings can be made.
- (b) Supports the inclusion of the grant for the Letterkenny branch of the Dyslexia Association.

Cllr Ian McGarvey

Cllr McGarvey said he disagreed with many aspects of the Budget Book. He stated that an additional 1% from Government Grants would mean no increases.

C/10/06

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at this point.

C/11/06

RESUMPTION OF MEETING

The meeting resumed at 4.30 p.m.

On the resumption of the meeting Cllr. Francis Conaghan proposed that the meeting be adjourned to the 18th January 2006 @ 10.00 a.m. to allow time for the County Manager and the Head of Finance to meet with all parties and answer the Members' questions. Cllr. Terence Slowey seconded this proposal and it was agreed unanimously.