

MINUTES OF ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY
COUNCIL, HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON 21ST
NOVEMBER, 2018

C/319/18 MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs S Ó Domhnaill, Cathaoirleach, L Blaney, E Bonner, C Brogan, J Campbell, P Canning, T Conaghan, G Crawford, N Crossan, A Doherty, G Doherty, L Doherty, M Doherty, R Donaghey, M Farren, M T Gallagher, A Glackin, M Harley, N Jordan, J Kavanagh, N Kennedy, M C Mac Giolla Easbuig, F Mc Brearty Jnr, M Mc Bride, M McDermott, I Mc Garvey, P McGowan, B McGuinness, G Mc Monagle, J Murray, M Naughton, J S Ó'Fearraigh, B O'Neill, and T Slowey.

C/320/18 OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Joe Peoples, Director of Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services / Meetings Administrator, R Gibson, A/Head of Finance, John McLaughlin, Director of Roads & Transportation, Liam Ward, Director of Community & Planning Services, Michael Mc Garvey, Director of Water & Environment, Garry Martin, Director of Economic Development, Information Systems & Emergency Services, Tanya Kee, Management Accountant, Anne Marie Quinn, Administrative Officer, Anne Marie Conlon, Communications Officer, Róise Ní Laifeartaigh, Rannóg na Gaeilge, Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer.

C/321/18 CONSIDERATION OF THE 2019 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET- CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ADDRESS, ADDRESS BY THE A/HEAD OF FINANCE AND FROM EACH DIRECTOR OF SERVICE

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Members to the meeting. He said that consideration of the 2019 Draft Budget would commence with an introduction and presentation from the Chief Executive, Mr Seamus Neely. This, he added, would be followed by presentations from the Acting Head of Finance and the Directors of Service, after which members would have an opportunity to debate and discuss the contents of the 2019 Budget Book.

The Chief Executive addressing the meeting set the context for the 2019 Budget and provided an overview of the main priorities for the Council in 2019. He alluded to the following, which, he said, had underpinned the Council's work schedule over the past number of years:-

- Corporate Plan 2015-2019
- Member's Priorities
- Provision of the relevant supports to maintain and develop economic growth.
- Pursuit of Regional and Cross- Border Development
- Promotion of Community Development including Tourism Development and Marketing.
- Enhancement of the Diaspora Programme.

He noted that a new Corporate Plan would have to be prepared in 2019 and that the emphasis going forward would be continuing to deliver core responsibilities, whilst controlling the cost base, and expanding affordability options.

Mr Richard Gibson, A/Head of Finance, updated Members in relation to the legislation governing the preparation of the Draft Budget and the Three Year Capital Budget.

An overview of the financial issues for Income & Expenditure relating to balancing the 2019 requirement was provided including details of how the 2019 figures compared with the 2018 figures.

This was presented on a service by service basis.

The Draft Budget, Mr Gibson confirmed provided for expenditure in the sum of €145,979,803 for the year ending 31st December, 2019.

He thus called on the Elected Members to endorse the following:-

- A harmonised rate of €71.81 for County and former Town Council areas of Letterkenny and Bundoran for 2019.
- Establishment of a rate of €54.29 for the former town Council area of Buncrana for 2019.
- The retention of the existing policy in relation to the Vacancy Rate on Commercial Properties for 2019.
- The continuation of the Small Business Grant Scheme at a cost of €375,000 in 2019.

Members were updated also in relation to the various budgetary strategies and associated operational targets in the short, medium and long-term

C/322/18 PRESENTATIONS BY DIRECTORS OF SERVICE
The Directors of Service outlined in detail the 2019 budgetary provisions as applicable to their respective Directorates.

C/323/18 CONSIDERATION OF THE 2019 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET- CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ADDRESS, ADDRESS BY THE A/HEAD OF FINANCE AND THE DIRECTORS OF SERVICE

The Cathaoirleach noted that the 2019 Budget Book had been considered by the Corporate Policy Group, and that by and large the wishes of the members were reflected in the book.

The Cathaoirleach opened the meeting to the floor and said that it was intended to break for lunch at 1pm.

Members were generally appreciative of the fact that there was no proposed increase in rates in the Draft Budget or in relation to the Local Property Tax.

Excellent work in tourism was acknowledged including the fact that works had progressed significantly at Sliabh Liag and Malin Head. Cognisance was taken also of the impending Brexit scenario and the fact that it would have far reaching implications for the County, necessitating a collaborative effort from all involved.

There was general acknowledgement that the ongoing collaboration between Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council had been most beneficial, and that this had been reflected in a number of joint ventures undertaken over the last number of years.

A lengthy debate ensued with members raising a variety of issues.

Cllr O' Neill proposed, seconded by Cllr Mc Brearty that the 2019 Budget as presented be adopted.

C/324/18 ADJOURNMENT FOR LUNCH
It was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting for lunch.

C/325/18 CONSIDERATION OF THE 2019 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET- CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ADDRESS, ADDRESS BY THE A/HEAD ADJOURNMENT FOR LUNCH

Cllr Mac Giolla Easbuig said that he was not in a position to support the 2019 Budget as insufficient funding had been provided for both housing and roads services, further decimating rural Donegal. He alluded also to the lack of services on the Donegal Islands and proposed, seconded by Cllr Campbell to reject the 2019 Budget as presented.

The Chief Executive acknowledged members comments in relation to the overall budget process noting that the starting point had been a recognition of the fact that members did not want to see any increase in the Local Property Tax or in Commercial Rates. He alluded to the excellent Programme of Works which had been carried out in the Housing Service over the past year with every effort made to get as many developments as possible over the line in 2018.

The Chief Executive also clarified that the Service Level Agreement with Irish Water had not changed and would continue on the basis of the existing arrangements and that staff should be assured that their employment continued to be with the Council.

Progress was also being made, he advised, in relation to the North West Greenways Project with a second resource being added to that work in 2019.

There was, he contended, scope to look pragmatically at the request for a Business Retail Incentive Scheme in 2019.

Attention was drawn also to the fact that increased staffing resources had been deployed in the area of waste enforcement. This was to be welcomed, he said, as those who flouted the regulations were damaging not only the environment but the reputation of the county as a whole.

Additional Funding elements announced by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport could possibly be utilised, he advised, to progress the whole area of Municipal Playing Fields. With regards arrangements for the Council Chamber it was noted that there were three to four options which could be reviewed. This it was acknowledged would be progressed as a priority with the new Council.

It was noted that the member's preference had been for the retention of two fire stations in Ballyshannon and Bundoran and that this preference had been communicated to the Department together with a request for a delegation to meet with the Minister to discuss the relevant funding options.

Mr Richard Gibson, A/ Head of Finance responding to a number of queries from Cllr Campbell advised of the following:-

That internal capital receipts were shown in Service Division H under other income on page 79 of the 2019 Budget Book.

With regards the 2018 outturn the figures presented were projections at this stage. Any ordinary transfers, he confirmed would be reflected in Division H under Miscellaneous Services. Internal Capital Receipts were used, he said, as a contribution to capital projects and thus alleviated the requirement to spend from revenue funds.

Alluding to the IPB Historical Excesses Balance and whether or not any or all of this was being used for footpath improvements, he informed members that IPB was covering all excesses and keeping account of those over time as the various claims rolled through. A definitive figure, he advised, could not be provided at this time.

The Chief Executive concluding informed members that there was no specific budget provision in 2019 for the Designated Activity Company. A decision had been taken initially to set this up, he said, and members would be further consulted in 2019 with regards specific representation on the Company.

The Cathaoirleach advised that there were two proposals to be considered, namely the proposal by Cllr O' Neill, seconded by Cllr Mc Brearty to adopt the 2019 Budget as presented and Cllr Mac Giolla Easbuig's proposal, seconded by Cllr Campbell to reject the 2019 Budget as it did not provide adequate funding capabilities or deliver the required monies to fund overall service provision county-wide.

He called for a recorded vote and said that those in favour of the 2019 Budget would be required to vote yes with those opposed to same voting no.

Mr Joe Peoples, Meetings Administrator informed members that they were being asked to adopt for the financial year ended the 31st December, 2019, the Budget as set out in Tables A& B, resulting in an Annual Rate in valuation of €71.81 as shown in table A and subject to Section 10 of the local Government (Financial Provisions) Act 1978, having regard to the Base Year Adjustment with a Multiplier of €54.29 for the former Buncrana Town Council area as set out in Table C, and determined in accordance with Section 29 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

A roll call was then taken by the Meetings Administrator and the following members deemed present;-

Cllrs E Bonner, J Campbell, P Canning, T Conaghan, G Crawford N Crossan, A Doherty, G Doherty, L Doherty, M Doherty, R Donaghey, M Farren, M T Gallagher, A Glackin, M Harley, N Jordan, J Kavanagh, N Kennedy, M C Mac Giolla Easbuig, F Mc Brearty Jnr, M Mc Bride, M McDermott, I Mc Garvey, P McGowan, B McGuinness, G Mc Monagle, J Murray, S O'Domhnaill, J S Ó'Fearraigh, and B O'Neill. (30)

Those voting for were:-

Cllrs E Bonner, P Canning, T Conaghan, G Crawford N Crossan, A Doherty, G Doherty, L Doherty, M Doherty, R Donaghey, M Farren, M T Gallagher, A Glackin, M Harley, N Jordan, J Kavanagh, N Kennedy, F Mc Brearty Jnr, M Mc Bride, M McDermott, I Mc Garvey, P McGowan, B McGuinness, G Mc Monagle, J Murray, S O'Domhnaill, J S Ó'Fearraigh, and B O'Neill. (28)

Those voting against were:-

Cllrs Campbell & Mac Giolla Easbuig. (2)

Thus it was resolved on the proposal of Cllr O' Neill, seconded by Cllr Mc Brearty to adopt for the financial year ended the 31st December, 2019, the Budget as set out in Tables A& B, resulting in an Annual Rate in valuation of €71.81 as shown in Table A and subject to Section 10 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions) Act 1978, having regard to the Base Year Adjustment with a Rate Multiplier of €54.29 for the former Buncrana Town

Council area, as set out in Table C, and determined in accordance with Section 29 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

The Cathaoirleach thanked members for their co-operation and engagement and paid tribute to all involved in the preparation of the 2019 Budget.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Cathaoirleach

Dated