

**Minutes of Municipal District of Stranorlar, Budget Meeting held on Friday 6th November 2015 in the Council Chamber, County House, Lifford, commencing at 09.00am.**

**Members Present:**

Cllr. Gary Doherty

Cllr. Patrick McGowan

Cllr. Gerry Crawford (Leas Cathaoirleach)

Cllr. Liam Doherty

Cllr. Martin Harley

**Officials Present:**

Gary Martin, Director of Service, Finance, I.S. & Emergency Services.

Joe Peoples, Director of Service, Senior Management Team.

Lynda Mc Gavigan, Acting Area Manager, Housing & Corporate Services.

Garrett Doherty, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Roads & Transportation.

Martina Morris, Senior Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

**Apologies:** Cllr. Frank McBrearty. (Cathaoirleach).

**80.00. Finance.**

Gary Martin briefly outlined the reason for the Meeting was to discuss the details of the Draft Budgetary Plan for the Stranorlar Municipal District and General Municipal Allocation for 2016, as circulated with the Agenda.

He commented on recent suggestions by some Members of D.C.C. that the Budget process being pursued by D.C.C. was 'legally flawed' and not in line with the prescribed legislation.

Addressing this issue Mr. Martin stated that, he is satisfied the process adopted by D.C.C. is, in line with the requirements of the current legislation.

He said that the Members were being asked, at this time, to adopt a provisional general Municipal allocation in the amount of € 100,000 - with this figure to be considered in the round at the 2016 Plenary Revenue Budget Meeting, and, with a view to assessing the capacity of the organisation to increase this amount.

He stated that the Draft Budgetary Plan as presented to the Members recognises the current financial restrictions on the Council, and also, recognises that the Plenary Budget Meeting is yet to be held.

He further stated that, while the Members were being asked to consider the Draft Budgetary Plan as presented, it was up to the Members to decide to either, approve, amend or reject the Plan.

He indicated that, in advance of the Plenary Budget Meeting being held, he felt it would be impractical for the Members to identify or prioritise items as part of the Municipal Budget at this time, and, would recommend the Members adopt the Draft Budgetary Plan as presented.

He pointed out that there is scope to re-convene a meeting of the Municipal District after the Plenary Budget Meeting has been held, to allow the Members to allocate the funds available (would then be a known figure) to whatever projects/ services etc the Members wished.

The Members thanked Mr. Martin for his comments and his statement on the Councils position in relation to the recent controversy regarding the Budget process.

However, Members expressed the view that there are 'flaws' in the current process. The Budget process/ legislation as currently exists, is confusing, and frustrating, and there is a need for the legislation to be reviewed, particularly in relation to the adoption of the process in the Municipal Districts .

The Members requested that this message be conveyed by Donegal County Council to the Department.

In relation to the Draft Budgetary Plan as presented, the Members expressed their disappointment that a number of issues were not identified and sought clarification on the following:

- **Roads Allocation** - the Members felt that the Draft Document failed to emphasise the need for more monies to be allocated to the maintenance of Roads in the Stranorlar Municipal District.  
They pointed to the fact that the way in which the Roads allocations are currently divided among the Municipal Districts (based on km of roads in the Area) effectively means that Stranorlar (with the lowest km of roads) receives significantly less funding than any other Area each year.

However, Members have continuously stressed that the situation in respect of Roads Maintenance in the Stranorlar Area is at crisis point and something has to be done to address the issue.

Following lengthy discussions on this issue, it was agreed by the Members that the gap in funding that exists in the amount of monies being allocated for Roads, between Stranorlar Municipal District and the other Municipal Districts in the County, be recognised in the Budget Book and the possibility of bridging or reducing this gap, would be acknowledged as a stated objective of the Council.

- **Balor Arts Centre** - Members sought assurances that funding for the Balor would come from central funding rather than, the Centre being dependant on getting monies from the Members Development Fund each year. As this is a discretionary fund the Members could not guarantee the amount of funding available for the Balor.
- **Stranorlar Leisure Centre** - Members again sought to have funding for the Leisure Centre allocated from the Councils central fund rather than the Municipal allocation, in much the same way as monies are allocated towards the costs of An Grianan Theatre and the Regional Cultural Centre in Letterkenny.

In response to the Members comments, Mr. Martin stated that there was a different approach adopted by the Council to funding for maintenance costs etc for buildings that are owned by the Council, such as An Grianan, and ones not owned by the Council, such as the Balor Arts Centre - these were traditionally funded by way of allocations from various Departments within the Council and allocations from the Members Development Fund.

He stated that there was no 'magic pool of monies' available but, there was scope to examine what monies are there, and how they are allocated, to determine what level of funding may be available to the Balor this year.

In respect of funding for Stranorlar Leisure Centre, he stated that this issue is currently under review and there should be a provision for funding in the 2016 Revenue Budget.

He acknowledged that Members concerns regarding the Roads Allocation and suggested that *the Members could agree to adopt the Draft Budgetary Plan as presented, subject to amendment that an agreed statement be entered*

*into the Budget Book which reflects the Members sentiments in relation to the gap in allocation of funding between Stranorlar Municipal District and the other Municipal Districts, and, stating a declared aim to bridge this gap.*

Cllr. Martin Harley then proposed that the Draft Budgetary Plan be adopted subject to amendment as suggested by Mr. Martin.

This proposal was seconded by Cllr. Liam Doherty and agreed by all the Members present.

**This concluded the business of the meeting.**

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Area Manager,  
Municipal District of Stranorlar.

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Catahoirleach.  
Municipal District of Stranorlar.