



Miontuairiscí/Meeting Minutes

Statutory Budget Meeting 9th December 2010, Council Chamber

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Ann Dillon Gallagher, presided.

Members Present:

Councillors Joseph Bonner, Ray Butler, Sirena Campbell, Willie Carey, Shane Cassells, Eugene Cassidy, Francis Deane, Regina Doherty, John V Farrelly, Jimmy Fegan, Brian Fitzgerald, Oliver Fox, Wayne Harding, Jim Holloway, Eoin Holmes, Suzanne Jamal, Nick Killian, Noel Leonard, Niamh McGowan, Jenny McHugh, Maria Murphy, Bryan Reilly, Joe Reilly, Tommy Reilly.

Officials in Attendance:

County Manager: Tom Dowling

Directors of Service: Eugene Cummins, Kevin Stewart, Fiona Lawless, Brendan McGrath.

Meetings Administrator Martin Rogers

Senior Executive Officers: Michael Griffin, Larry Whelan, Ger Murphy (Acting)

Finance Staff: Paul Timoney, Sheila Harkin.

Apologies: Councillors Jimmy Cudden, Tracy McElhinney, Seamus O'Neill and Catherine Yore.

1. That Meath County Council adopts for the financial year ending 31st December 2011 the Annual Budget set out in Tables A – F.
2. That Meath County Council determines in accordance with the Budget as adopted the rate as set out in Table A and Column (7) of Table C to be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for the financial year ending 31st December 2011 for the purposes set out in Table A and Table C.
3. That Meath County Council approves of the transfer to capital account of the sums provided for various capital purposes in the Annual Budget for 2011 as adopted.

It was noted that the Statutory Budget book including Tables A-F had been circulated to the Members in advance of the Preliminary Budget meeting.

An Leas Cathaoirleach Councillor Shane Cassells opened the meeting and requested an adjournment for 15 minutes which was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Tommy Reilly seconded by Councillor John V. Farrelly.

Adjourned Meeting

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Ann Dillon Gallagher opened the adjourned meeting and asked Tom Dowling, Co. Manager to address the Council. The Members were informed that the Draft Budget had assumed a 10% reduction in the Local Government Fund however from recent discussions with the Department it is now believed that the reduction will be in the order of 7%. The County Manager indicated that as a result the expected LGF allocation was now €25.5m and represents an increase in available funding from the original estimate of €860,100. He advised that it is intended to allocate this funding taking into account the needs identified from the issues raised by the Councillors as follows:

- Housing maintenance €125,100
- Road Maintenance €200,000
- Water Maintenance €200,000



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- Incubator Units €50,000
- Unfinished Housing Estates €100,000
- Income Contingency €185,000

Total €860,100

The County Manager indicated that whilst the 2011 budget will be able to deliver improvements he was concerned about the position in 2012 and if funding deteriorated or unforeseen circumstances, such as a major environmental issue arose, the Council could face very difficult times.

The County Manager stated that this budget represents good value for money and commended it to the Members.

The Members were then given an opportunity for comments and further questions and issues raised included the following:

- Whilst welcoming the additional funds the ongoing decreases in LGF would present challenges to the Council in the future in delivery of services
- The need to clarify the extent of the problem of unfinished estates in County Meath
- The need for funding for drainage of the river Hurley
- The funding of and expenditure on grants for the disabled and the elderly
- The need to continue efforts to encourage investment in the county
- The need to stimulate the local economy
- The need to continue momentum in the taking in charges of housing estates
- The benefits of such schemes as village renewal and pride of place
- The need to work with local communities
- The increased budget for General Development Promotion(D404) and Social Inclusion (D603)
- Perceived delays in the Higher Education grants system

The following motion was put forward by Councillor Fitzgerald:

“Because of the major fall-off in development within the county, the reduction in the commercial rate take, the unacceptable level of funding from the Local Government Fund and our huge unemployment levels, this 2011 budget meeting of Meath County Council consider the following as an incentive and a stimulant to growth in our local economy-

1. Residential Development levies – where a Commencement Notice is issued in 2011, all development levies paid in 2011 be reduced by 50%
2. Industrial Development - where a Commencement Notice is issued in 2011, all development levies be reduced by 75% once paid in 2011
3. Commercial developments – where a Commencement Notice is issued in 2011, all development levies be reduced by 50% once paid in 2011
4. All new businesses (Industrial/Commercial) once opened in 2011, be granted an exemption from Commercial rates for 2011 and 50% reduction in 2012”

Following a discussion it was agreed to refer this to the Planning SPC.

In responding to the issues raised the Council Manager made the following salient points:

- ⇒ The county was extremely attractive for future investment opportunities with excellent infrastructure/services as well as top class economic team
- ⇒ The efficiency review group had acknowledged that this Council was doing more with less and had less staff per head of population and also less rates and government funding



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- ⇒ This was the second year in a row that there was no increase in the rate and the rate is still one of the lowest in the country. No increase is proposed in rent or in the charge for non domestic water.
- ⇒ Council will continue to work in partnership with local communities
- ⇒ Council will pursue unfinished estates to legal end and have put in place an improved taking in charge team
- ⇒ Funds provided will allow Council to work with a number of groups including heritage
- ⇒ Council has placed a focus on economic development which is vital for investment in the county and will be working to taking advantage of events in 2011 such as the Solheim Cup
- ⇒ Council continues to provide funds for grants for disabled and the provision of €200,000 can generate almost €1m in spending
- ⇒ Council will need to explore options for village renewal as there is no grant aid available

The County Manager then invited Fiona Lawless, Head of Finance and Kevin Stewart, Director of Services to deal with a number of specific issues raised.

Fiona Lawless, Head of Finance advised as follows:

- An amount was included on the income side for Social Inclusion
- €12m had been spent on DPG's over the last number of years with over €1.8m allocated to 130 applicants in 2010. Funds were again provided for this in 2011
- A small cut was provided for in the Pride of Place budget

Kevin Stewart, Director of Services explained as follows:

- The overall budget for General Development Promotion (D404) included Salary Costs (€217,400) as well as contributions to Mid East Regional Authority, South East Regional Assembly and Eastern Border Region. The remainder of the budget was for Economic Development Initiatives and included Solheim Cup and the Braemore Port Project.
- In relation to Higher Education Grants 86% of applications have been processed and all available resources are applied to this area

Councillor Niamh McGowan sought clarification on the Budget process and in particular whether a revised Budget book would need to issue having regard to the increase in the Local Government Fund allocation.

Fiona Lawless, Head of Finance, confirmed that the Budget book as circulated would not be altered as it is a statutory document. She further advised that the increased expenditure identified (€860,100) would be put forward for approval to the Members as over expenditure during the course of 2011.

The proposed Budget as presented and the terms as set out in Items 1, 2 and 3 of the agenda was adopted on the proposition of Councillor J.V. Farrelly and seconded by Councillor Eoin Holmes following the role call vote:

Councillor	Vote
Cllr. Joseph Bonner	Yes
Cllr Ray Butler	Yes
Cllr. Sirena Campbell	Yes
Cllr. William Carey	Yes



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Cllr. Shane Cassells	Yes
Cllr. Eugene Cassidy	Yes
Cllr. Jimmy Cudden	Absent
Cllr. Francis Deane	Yes
Cllr. Anne Dillon-Gallagher	Yes
Cllr. Regina Doherty	Yes
Cllr. John Farrelly	Yes
Cllr. Jimmy Fegan	Yes
Cllr. Brian Fitzgerald	Yes
Cllr. Oliver Fox	Yes
Cllr. Wayne Harding	Yes
Cllr. James Holloway	Yes
Cllr. Eoin Holmes	Yes
Cllr. Suzanne Jamal	Yes
Cllr. Nick Killian	Absent
Cllr. Noel Leonard	Yes
Cllr. Tracy McElhinney	Absent
Cllr. Niamh McGowan	Yes
Cllr. Jenny McHugh	Yes
Cllr. Maria Murphy	Yes
Cllr. Seamus O' Neill	Absent
Cllr. Joe Reilly	Absent
Cllr. Bryan Reilly	Yes
Cllr. Tommy Reilly	Yes
Cllr. Catherine Yore	Absent

Result: For= 23 Against = 0, Absent = 6

4. That Meath County Council approves the estimated over expenditure for financial year 31st December 2010 as set out in Table A-F and outturn details.

It was noted that details of expenditure in the various divisions/services had been circulated to the Members. On the proposal of Councillor Tommy Reilly seconded by Councillor John V. Farrelly the estimated over expenditure was approved.

Severe Weather

In a short verbal report in relation to the severe weather Brendan McGrath Director of Services, advised that (a) water supply demand in the county was creeping up and whilst the situation was not critical at the moment there was a need to conserve water for essential use only and (b) road conditions in the county had improved but there was still a need to drive with care.



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The Cathaoirleach thanked the County Manager, the Head of Finance and her staff for their hard work in balancing a very difficult budget and wished the Members and staff a happy Christmas. These comments were endorsed by Councillors John V. Farrelly, Shane Cassells and Brian Fitzgerald.

The Co. Manager also extended his good wishes to the Cathaoirleach, Members and staff for a happy Christmas.

This concluded the business of the meeting.