



Miontuairiscí/Meeting Minutes

Statutory Budget Meeting 19th December 2011, Council Chamber

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Eoin Holmes, presided.

Members Present:

Councillors Joseph Bonner, Sirena Campbell, Willie Carey, Shane Cassells, Eugene Cassidy, Jimmy Cudden, Francis Deane, Ann Dillon –Gallagher, John V Farrelly, Jimmy Fegan, Brian Fitzgerald, Joe Fox, Oliver Fox, Wayne Harding, Jim Holloway, Suzanne Jamal, Nick Killian, Noel Leonard, Tracy McElhinney, Niamh McGowan, Jenny McHugh, Maria Murphy, Gerry O' Connor, Seamus O'Neill Bryan Reilly, Joe Reilly, Tommy Reilly, Catherine Yore.

Officials in Attendance:

County Manager: Tom Dowling

Directors of Service: Kevin Stewart, Fiona Lawless, Brendan McGrath, Tadhg McDonnell, Des Foley.

Meetings Administrator Martin Rogers

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

Finance Staff: Paul Timoney, Pat McHugh, Sheila Harkin, Michael Murtagh, Ger Soady

Administrative Officer: Olive Falsey

Apologies:

1. That Meath County Council adopts for the financial year ending 31st December 2012 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 2012 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 2012 as adopted.

The Cathaoirleach opened the meeting and 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. The County Manager addressed the meeting, referred to his address at the preliminary budget meeting and reiterated that the budget is balanced and presented in a manner that retains the delivery of all the new services provided over the past ten years in addition to the statutory services. These include active community support, library, art and cultural support, economic incentivisation, road safety, health and safety, heritage, tourism etc. He stressed that the budget is positive for County Meath and represents an investment between Capital and Revenue expenditure of over €166m in County Meath. There is no reduction proposed or suggested in the local contribution to Roads Maintenance, Housing Maintenance or Water Services, Fire Services or Environmental Services. With the efficiencies created over the past few years there will, at the minimum, be at least as good a service provided as in 2011. He 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:

- Decrease in Local Government Fund was noted and the situation where funding for services is decreasing while charges are increasing.



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- Recognition that communities are well endowed with facilities but that in many cases they are liable for commercial rates which presents serious challenges to clubs to generate funds – calling on County Manager to show tolerance and understanding in this regard.
- National Spatial Strategy mitigates against Meath.
- Lack of facilities such as a library and playground in Enfield.
- Stimulus package needed for Kells as seems to be left behind when it comes to development.
- No increase in rates is welcomed.
- Slane Bypass – important that it is still on the agenda but the projected spend of €36m. gives false hope when it is not in this Government's four year plan.
- Budget represents value for money – doing more with less.
- Could household charge be paid with rent card?
- Wealth of culture and heritage that could be promoted in North Meath.
- It's the small family businesses that create jobs in North Meath and income will go off-target with businesses closing down.
- Croke Park Agreement must be re-negotiated and surplus staff in other local authorities should be redeployed to local authorities with fewer resources.
- More money should be invested in Clonee village.
- Income from commercial rates lowest in Greater Dublin Area, continuous growth in population but no growth in industry.
- Housing list growing and no building of housing units planned this year.
- Very difficult for senior managers with multiple roles and an ever increasing workload– should be a focus on economic development and forward planning to attract businesses to the county.
- Need to progress the cleaning of the rail line from Kingscourt to Navan – enormous potential for tourism.

The County Manager responded as follows:

- Economic Development: Very strong focus on economic development e.g. Meath Council leading the way re Braemor Port with €50,000 in last year's budget to facilitate study. Building of new hospital is the responsibility of the HSE but Meath County Council will put no obstacle in the way of this development.
- Restructuring of Directorates now complete and the Council has to make the best use of staff resources.
- Slane Bypass – cannot be removed from capital programme and it is the desire of Meath County Council that this project will proceed.
- Kells needs special support to move forward and the Council will be positive in this regard.
- There is a need for more outdoor staff but the financial implications prevent the Council from recruiting additional staff numbers.
- The community in Clonee needs to engage with the Council.
- The council will be working closely with NAMA to examine if there are benefits for County Meath.

The Head of Finance responded as follows:

- The Valuation Office has been contacted re sports facilities. The Council has no leeway and operates as fairly as possible but once a place is valued there is nothing that can be done.
- Household charge will be collected centrally and can be paid on-line or by post.



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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 Jenny McHugh following the role call vote:

Councillor	Vote
Cllr. Joseph Bonner	Yes
Cllr. Sirena Campbell	Yes
Cllr. William Carey	Yes
Cllr. Shane Cassells	Yes
Cllr. Eugene Cassidy	Yes
Cllr. Jimmy Cudden	Yes
Cllr. Francis Deane	Yes
Cllr. Ann Dillon-Gallagher	Yes
Cllr. John Farrelly	Yes
Cllr. Jimmy Fegan	Yes
Cllr. Brian Fitzgerald	Yes
Cllr. Joe Fox	Yes
Cllr. Oliver Fox	Yes
Cllr. Wayne Harding	Yes
Cllr. James Holloway	Yes
Cllr. Eoin Holmes	Yes
Cllr. Suzanne Jamal	Yes
Cllr. Nick Killian	Yes
Cllr. Noel Leonard	Yes
Cllr. Tracy McElhinney	Absent
Cllr. Niamh McGowan	Yes
Cllr. Jenny McHugh	Yes
Cllr. Maria Murphy	Yes
Cllr. Gerry O' Connor	Yes
Cllr. Seamus O' Neill	Yes
Cllr. Bryan Reilly	Yes
Cllr. Joe Reilly	Abstain
Cllr. Tommy Reilly	Yes
Cllr. Catherine Yore	Yes

Result: For= 27 Against = 0, Absent = 1, Abstain = 1

- That Meath County Council approves the estimated over expenditure for financial year 31st December 2011 as set out in Table A – F and out-turn details.
Approved on the proposal of **Councillor John v. Farrelly** and seconded by **Councillor Tommy Reilly**.
- Disposal of Land in accordance with Statutory Notices circulated pursuant to the provisions of Section 183 of the Local Government Act, 2001.



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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 holiday. These comments were endorsed and Christmas wishes were extended to all by Councillors John V. Farrelly, Shane Cassells, Willie Carey and Brian Fitzgerald.

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

The Cathaoirleach and the County Manager acknowledged the imminent retirement of Martin Rogers, S.E.O. and Meetings' Administrator. His dedication and commitment as a public servant was commended. He was thanked for his work across many Departments in the Council and wished good health and happiness in his retirement.

This concluded the business of the meeting.