

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
MEETING NO. 873**

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**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL****Minutes of Meeting No. 873 held in the Borough Offices, Riada House, on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2008 at 7.00 pm**

**In The Chair**            The Mayor, Councillor J Finlay

**Present**                Aldermen:  
C Cousley  
H Connolly  
F Campbell  
J Simpson

Councillors:  
A Cavlan  
B Kennedy  
M McCamphill  
P McGuigan  
T McKeown  
A Patterson  
E Robinson

**In attendance**        Chief Executive  
Director of Borough Services  
Head of Corporate & Development Services

**873.1 Rate Estimate 2008-09**

The Mayor indicated that his party had met prior to the meeting and was unhappy about the service received with regard to provision of information requested and a rate book with full information, to facilitate their consideration of the draft rate estimate. He requested outstanding information to be provided following which the party would call a meeting within five working days. Councillor Robinson expressed disappointment that information regarding surpluses over the last five years, details of insured vehicles and various other matters she had requested information on from Head of Finance & IT had not been supplied. She also stated that she found some of the figures in the rates book perplexing and puzzling when compared with figures from previous years rates books. She also sought information on the increase in spend between month six and month nine variance reports and asked for detailed reports on high spend items and detailed analysis and explanation of overspent budgets.

The Chief Executive expressed regret that members were unhappy with the service and indicated that this was the first time it had been brought to his attention that information requested had not been supplied. He explained, however the difficulty under which management was operating at the present time with the absence of the Director since 15<sup>th</sup> October and the absence of the Head of Finance & IT on sick leave. Nevertheless he undertook to make arrangements to provide whatever information was required upon receipt of details of the information requirements. Councillor Robinson indicated that she had passed a list of information required to the Head of Finance & IT at the conclusion of the last meeting and had not retained a copy of this. The Chief Executive advised the meeting that:

1. Book 2 now contains actual expenditure & income figures for 2006/07 and 9 month actual expenditure & income figures for 2007/08.
2. The Head of Finance & IT is on sick leave, but did manage to complete the 9 month variance report for 2007/08; that was e-mailed to members and copies made available at the meeting. It had come to light that due to a computer crash the email may not have been delivered to members' inboxes.
3. He had intended to complete work on requests for additional data today, to have it for this meeting, but clearly that wasn't possible due to his absence. He hopes to return to work tomorrow and deal with those items then.
4. I and the Director of Borough Services may be able to answer questions on the rates book or on the variance report tonight; however it is likely that some will require a reply from Finance and those will be taken note of and passed to Head of Finance & IT on his return.
5. The rates book (v.2), excluding loan charges for new capital projects, shows a rate increase of 8.57%, compared with a figure of 9.52% in book 1. The main elements in the reduction in net cost of £55k are as follows: -
  - a. Indoor leisure £15k – reduction in wages
  - b. Waste disposal £23k – haulage costs reduced
  - c. Corporate management £3k - printing & stationery costs reduced
  - d. Removal of many inflationary increases
6. There is little change in inflation figures for December compared with November. Consumer Prices Index (CPI) remains at 2.1%, while Retail Prices Index (RPI) has fallen from 4.3 to 4%. MPs have accepted a pay increase worth 1.9% this year and the government wants public sector pay to be capped at 2%.
7. Options for reducing the level of increase have been looked at and will be further considered on Head of Finance & IT's return. These include; removal of more inflationary increases, reducing the provision for the 2008 pay increase to 2%, (currently in at 2.5%); and revising upwards the income figures for Town Hall, JDLC, Tourism, Waste Collection, Building Control & Bank interest. It may be possible by these means to reduce the increase to 7%, plus the cost of loan charges for capital projects.
8. If all the costed projects listed for the last meeting were included, loan charges are estimated to be £149,824, equivalent to 3.15% using a figure of 1% equating to £47,500 increase in rates income. This would take the overall increase to around 10%.
9. Head of Finance & IT reported at the last meeting on the level of increases proposed at that time by other councils. This information is gathered periodically by one of the Finance Officers ringing round his colleagues and then faxing out the results. The most current list available is dated 16<sup>th</sup> January and will be updated tomorrow. The figures range from 16.8% (Strabane) to 2% (Castlereagh), the average being 7%. Limavady were at 6.45%, Magherafelt - 6%, Coleraine - 5.9% and Larne - 3%; Ballymena Moyle and Newry & Mourne did not respond to the survey. Five councils (Antrim, Derry, Down, North Down & Strabane) were forecasting increases of 10% or more, but two of those were planning to reduce the figure to under 10%.

The Chief Executive and Director of Borough Services then responded to a number of questions by members, providing further information and explanation on budget provision, variances etc.

**The meeting adjourned at 8.00 p.m., to reconvene on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30 p.m.**

**The meeting reconvened on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2008 at 7.30 p.m., in the Borough Offices, Riada House.**

**In The Chair**            The Mayor, Councillor J Finlay

**Present**                Aldermen:  
F Campbell  
C Cousley  
H Connolly  
J Simpson

Councillors:  
A Cavlan  
M McCamphill  
T McKeown  
A Patterson  
E Robinson  
I Stevenson

**In attendance**        Chief Executive, Director of Borough Services  
Director of Central & Leisure Services  
Head of Finance & IT  
Head of Corporate & Development Services

**Apology**                Councillor D McKay

**873.2 Rate Estimate 2008-09**

The Chief Executive advised that management had looked at income, waste tonnage, pay provision and these matters and other minor amendments would be dealt with by the Head of Finance & IT. As a result the proposed increase was sitting at 6.12%, not taking account of any capital projects. He said he would welcome from members some indication as to what capital projects they favoured including advice as to what they would regard as an acceptable increase overall. The Chief Executive indicated that while Council had no influence on the national pay award he had taken account of increases agreed for police in England, NI & Wales, MP salaries and governments desire to maintain the public sector pay increases within 2%. It was therefore proposed to revise the increase to 2%.

The Head of Finance & IT referred members to the summary and comparison rate estimate sheet included in the rates book (v.3) and the schedule of increases/changes in excess of inflation (*attached as appendix A*). He also gave details of savings, increased level of income/grants, reductions in wages bill, bank interest increase, removal of inflationary increase in a number of budgets, while utility bills increase had been retained.

Councillor Robinson indicated that she had identified savings in some 20 service budgets, but required further time to undertake a detailed analysis of the latest edition of the rates book.

In the ensuing discussion officers responded to questions on waste tonnage, access to countryside spend on asserting rights of way, gas installation at Leisure Centre, Town Hall and Riada Stadium and increase in oil costs/oil additive. In relation to dual burners at council properties the Director of Borough Services indicated that consideration was being given to mothballing oil burners rather than providing for dual burners, as this option may be more advantageous to Council. He would seek advice from consultants on oil additives which had been used on a pilot basis at the leisure centre.

Responding to queries with regard to the cost of Christmas lighting installation the Director of Borough Services advised that the cost of provision of Christmas lighting included replacement features which council agreed would be funded from reserves and phased replacement from 240v to 120v bulbs. He also commented on issues arising from the accident which had occurred during the erection of the Christmas lights.

The Head of Corporate & Development Services presented report on evaluation of benefits from contributions to other bodies which had been circulated. This would be tabled at Resources Task Group and Audit Committee in due course.

The Director of Central and Leisure Services advised that funding provision of £100,000 was required for the fit-out of the museum, already agreed by Council. It was proposed to fund this work by way of a loan.

With regard to capital projects an economic appraisal would now be required to enable loan sanction approval. The scale of the project would determine the level of economic appraisal required.

It was agreed that the meeting arranged for 11<sup>th</sup> February be rearranged to Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30 p.m.

**The meeting adjourned at 8.30 p.m., to reconvene on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2008 at 2.30 p.m.**

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**The meeting re-convened on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2008 at 2.30 p.m. in the Borough Offices, Riada House.**

**In The Chair**                      The Mayor, Councillor J Finlay

**Present**                              Aldermen:  
C Cousley  
H Connolly  
J Simpson

    Councillors:  
A Cavlan  
M McCamphill  
T McKeown

A Patterson  
 E Robinson  
 I Stevenson  
 M Storey, MLA  
 R Wilson

**In attendance** Chief Executive  
 Director of Borough Services,  
 Director of Central & Leisure Services  
 Head of Corporate & Development Services

**Apologies** Councillor P McGuigan  
 Councillor D McKay, MLA

### 873.3 RATE ESTIMATE 2008-09

The Director of Central and Leisure Services referred to updated capital projects schedule circulated. Commenting on the draft estimate she advised that the single biggest increase was salaries and wages due to the job evaluation exercise, increased employers pension payments and estimated pay award of 2% and additional waste collection posts (4). The cost of this was offset by general grant and penny product increases.

Parties ten indicated their proposed revenue and capital savings, as set out in the attached schedule (*appendix B*).

Other issues which parties raised for consideration:

- (SF) potential to increase income in sports grounds, parks and open spaces.
- (DUP/SF) increase environmental health income
- (UUP) cost of Dunloy changing rooms very high and should be reviewed.
- (DUP) review mark-up on bins with a view to increase
- (DUP) increased cost of waste disposal and landfill tax to be passed on to trade
- (SF/DUP) reduction in agency staff
- (UUP) increase charges effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April rather than 1<sup>st</sup> September thus achieving increased income
- (UUP) ringfence councillors' conference allowance and do not permit transfer of allowance between members. (DUP) the present budget is insufficient to meet members' needs.
- (DUP) provide £7000-£10000 from reserves to cover upgrading of corporate website

The Mayor referred to the substantial cost of agency staff, highlighting the equivalent man hours and working weeks that this represented. He said his party considered considerable savings should be made in the cost of agency services. Councillor Robinson requested that the Director provide a list of key personnel who must be replaced during periods of sickness, vacancy and holidays. The Chief Executive advised that in addition to sickness absence agency workers were utilised for seasonal work as this was calculated to be a more cost effective option for Council. Agency workers were also utilised for sickness/holiday cover for key posts such as life guards, committee clerks in addition to vacant posts in the process of being filled through a recruitment exercise and posts being tested to determine requirements eg level of

opening hours. The Director of Central and Leisure Services advised that while provision had been made in the salary budgets for holiday costs for key posts, there was no budget provision for sickness absence. Councillor Cavlan suggested that consideration be given to increasing the establishment in the direct labour sections rather than use agency/contract labour.

The Director of Borough Services explained that the budget head – Plants/Materials under Sports Grounds, Parks & Open Spaces is the only money available to deal with all the service demands in respect of the provision of grounds maintenance services. The budget is used for items such as bedding plants, compost, fertilizer, sand, topsoil, quarry stone, fencing material, as well as contracted-in specialist services such as verti draining and tree surgery.

Commenting on the plant/vehicles budget under service heads – street cleaning and waste collection the Director intimated that this was the money which was available not only to repair and maintain plant/vehicles used to deliver these vital services but also the necessary plant/vehicles running costs such as road tax, insurance, tyres and fuel. It was the case, he pointed out, that cost of fuel had increased by 22% in the period January 2007 to January 2008. It was difficult to predict what would happen in the next financial year as regards the cost of fuel. In the main budgets had been increased by 3% with the exception of refuse collection where provision had been made for a fifth refuse collection vehicle which would operate full time from mid-March 2008. The fuel required to run the refuse collection operation accounted for 41.25% of the plant/vehicles budget spend this year and the corresponding figure for the street cleansing operation is 36.50%.

The Director of Borough Services explained that the income under Sports Grounds P&OS included a one-off payment relating to Castle Community Association for minor works at Westgate and Seymour Drive Play parks where the association had secured deprivation funding from DSD. He also indicated that the consequence of requiring increased income from sports grounds would necessitate an increase in income from facility charges for Riada Stadium and football pitches. He indicated the level of charges presently applying. Income from Roads Service for grass cutting was, he suggested, unlikely to be achieved beyond inflation and income from roundabout sponsorship had been settled by way of a three year contract recently let.

With regard to proposed reduction in dog tags spend the Director of Borough Services referred to Council's statutory obligation to issue an appropriate colour of tag with licence, the various colours issuing in cycles, with un-used tags being retained and augmented as appropriate.

In respect of health and safety spend the Director of Borough Services advised of the council's statutory duty to protect themselves with regard to corporate manslaughter.

Responding to Councillor Cavlan's comments with regard to play area provision at Scally Park the Director of Borough Services advised that the Leisure & Amenities Committee would consider development options at a future meeting, which may not require any funding by Council.

Parties indicated acceptable increases as:

DUP 3.288%  
SF 3%  
UUP 3%

The meeting closed at 4.45 p.m.

**Appendices**

A = Budget increases in excess of inflation and pay award 2008-09

B = Schedule of proposed savings presented by parties.

## Possible savings on 2008/09 Rate Estimate (version 3)

appendix B

Page	Service	Activity	effect on net cost £				IND AP
			DUP	SF	SDLP	UU	
4	Cultural Facilities	Community festivals	-1800			-13600	
4	Cultural Facilities	events and schemes					
4	Cultural Facilities	income				6800	
4	Cultural Facilities	Museum events	-8000	-5000			-12000
5	Town Hall	Rates					
6	Sports Development	Contributions				-2000	
6	Sports Development	SD programmes				-2000	
7	JDLC	New eqpt	-2500	-2500			-4000
7	JDLC	equip repairs					
7	JDLC	Maintenance	-5000	-5000			
7	JDLC	bld main fix plant					
7	JDLC	Telephone	-1500				
7	JDLC	Course/conference					
9	SGPOS	Plant/Materials	-25000	-30000		-25000	-20000
9	SGPOS	christmas lights					-2000
9	SGPOS	gnds main train/conf					
9	SGPOS	Waste					
9	SGPOS	Access					
9	SGPOS	income	-17000 ?				
10	Tourist Facilities	Publicity					
10	Tourist Facilities	Contrib.L.Bann P/s		-10000			
10	Tourist Facilities	Income					?
10	Tourist Facilities	contrib.CCGHT		-6000			
11	Tourism	Events	-2000				

11	tourism	contrib. AC&G	-17000		
11	Tourism	Goods for resale			
11	Tourism	Income			
12	Community Services	SC Electricity	-2000		-2000
12	Community Services	Furniture	-500		-500
12	Community Services	contributions CAB	-18000		
12	Community Services	CR Events			-10000
12	Community Services	Charges			
13	Amenities Support	travel & Sub			
14	Cemeteries	Income	-1000		
15	EH	Partnerships	-1000		-2000
15	EH	confer/courses			-1000 -2000
15	EH	computer sw			-2000
15	EH	Publicity			
15	EH	LA21	-1000	-1000	
15	EH	H&S	-1500	-1500	
15	EH	Telephone			
15	EH	income	?	?	
16	HAP - home accident	travel & sub			-1000
17	Dog Control	Tags			-1000
17	Dog Control	Vet fees			-1000
17	Dog Control				
20	Street Cleaning	Plant/Vehicles	-5000	-5000	
20	Street Cleaning	Litter receptacles	-1500		
20	Street Cleaning	income			
21	Waste Collection	Plant/Vehicles	-10000	-10000	
21	Waste Collection	publicity			
21	Waste Collection	print/stationery			
21	Waste Collection	Refuse containers	-5000		
21	Waste Collection	income	-10000		

22	Waste Disposal	Rates/Water rates				
22	Waste Disposal	WM Licence	-7500			
24	Building Control	Subscriptions				
24	Building Control	group demand				
24	Building Control	Salaries				
25	OCA	Rates				
25	OCA	Maint. Contracts	-10000	-12000		
26	Minor Works					
27	Economic Development	BSP	-30000	-30000		net
28	Members allowances	Conferences/Courses	5600			
28	Members allowances	travel				
29	Official/Courtesy etc.	Visits			-2000	
29	Official/Courtesy etc.	contrib. Twinn assn		-4000	-3000	-3000
31	Corporate management	Planning	-2000			
31	Corporate management	mkg & comm - web		-5000		-2500
31	Corporate management	Corporate plan	-1000			
31	Corporate management	Corporate training			-2000	-2500
31	Corporate management	wellbeing			-1000	
31	Corporate management	Internal audit	-5000		-5000	
35	Emergency Planning		-5000	-5000		-2000
38	DPP	public meetings			-1000	
38	DPP	recruitment			-17000	
39	CSP					
40	Works Depot	Rates				
40	Works Depot	drinking water			-100	
41	Admin Bldg	Contract cleaning			-5000	
41	Admin Bldg	waste coll/dis			-600	
41	Admin Bldg	maintenance			-1500	
41	Admin Bldg	drinking water			-500	
43	HR	software maintenance			-400	

43	HR	confer/courses	-1000	-500
44	Administration	Telephone	-4000	
45	ICT	Travel		
45	ICT	computer maintain	-1000	
45	ICT	consumables	-1000	
45	ICT	software		-2500
45	ICT	courses	-300	
remove 2% staff/att.allow				
			<b>-156200</b>	<b>-167000</b>
			<b>0</b>	<b>-102700</b>
				<b>-53000</b>