

BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting No. 916 held "in committee" in the Council Chamber, Borough Offices, Riada House, on Monday 8th February 2010, 7.00 p.m.; Wednesday 10th February 2010 at 7.00 p.m.; Friday 12th February 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

916.1 RATE ESTIMATE 2010-2011

Monday 8th February 2010

In the Chair: Alderman Frank Campbell (Mayor)

Present: Aldermen:
 H Connolly C Cousley, MBE (Deputy Mayor)
 J Simpson
 Councillors:
 A Cavlan J Finlay
 R Halliday M McCamphill
 P McGuigan D McKay, MLA
 A Patterson E Robinson
 I Stevenson

Apologies: Councillor
 B Kennedy M Storey, MLA

In Attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Borough Services,
 Director of Central & Leisure Services, Head of
 Corporate & Development Services

The Director of Central & Leisure Services circulated revised draft rate estimate summary, v.5, showing a revised rate increase of 9.97%

The Director of Borough Services updated the meeting on revisions to estimates for Sports Grounds, Parks & Open Spaces (SGPOS) budget, with regard to Access to the Countryside Connect II project, an additional budget of £1,300 to cover match funding; increased gas contract at Riada Stadium + £551; increase in waste collection income producing a £6,220 reduction in net figure; recalculation of waste disposal charges to take account of January RPI + £1,421. He advised that consideration was also being given to re-tendering of the waste disposal contract. He emphasised that all assumptions were predicated on Council not being in existence come June 2011 and as estimates re. waste arisings etc were not an easy matter to predict the estimates were not without risk.

The Director of Central & Leisure Services advised that potential savings on museum exhibitions of £5,000 put forward previously in her savings options had been considered by the Leisure & Amenities Committee was included in V.5 of the rate estimate book.

The meeting gave further consideration to possible service savings options put forward by the Chief Executive and Directors, at Council Meeting on 11 January, as revised to take account of Council decisions of 11 January and 2 February,

circulated. The Chief Executive and Directors gave further information and clarification in response to members questions and various members put forward their views on the options.

- Councillor McKay and Councillor McCamphill joined the meeting during consideration of the options, time; 8.05 p.m.

A schedule of possible contributions to other bodies was also reviewed and decisions deferred.

The Director of Central & Leisure Services updated the meeting on initiation of economic appraisal process for loan applications, year end reserve position and expected income from review of vacant properties by LPS.

- Councillor McGuigan left the meeting at this stage , time 8.45 p.m.

The Director of Central & Leisure Services responded to questions regarding leisure centre budgets, centre opening hours and staffing establishment, contract works for floor covering in Main and Minor Halls and procurement of marquee with associated equipment providing additional options for increased use of halls for functions. She confirmed that hire costs for tables and chairs were passed on to users.

The Chief Executive advised that while the vacant Tourism Co-Ordinator post was not to be filled the Office of the Chief Executive had undertaken to deliver tourism events and marketing activities and as a consequence it was agreed that the budget of £7,500 for these activities had been reinstated.

- Alderman Connolly left the meeting at this stage, time: 9.15 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9.15 p.m. to allow party groupings to meet and consider possible budget reductions. The meeting reconvened at 9.50 p.m.

Party groupings put forward suggested savings options: DUP Group £86,613.51, SF £106,521 and TUV £124,053.66.

Following discussion it was proposed by Councillor Stevenson, seconded by Councillor Halliday and **AGREED**:

that the proposed DUP group suggested savings, as set out in annex 1, totalling £86,613.51 be approved.

A discussion ensued regarding consequences of not providing further funding in the current and incoming year, as required by the Auditor for landfill closure and the Chief Executive responded to members' questions, indicating that Officers had met with the Auditor to clarify the position. The Chief Executive advised that the Auditor did not sign off the March 2009 financial statements by 31 October as he was seeking an increase in the landfill provision for the estimated post closure aftercare costs of £326K. This would have increased the landfill provision to £1669k from £1343k. The Auditor has indicated that if Council does not increase the

landfill provision by £326k then it is highly likely that he will qualify his audit report on the March 2009 financial statements.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay seconded by Councillor Cavlan and **AGREED:**

that the meeting be adjourned and reconvened on Wednesday 10 February 2010 at 7.00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11.00 p.m.

Wednesday 10th February 2010

The meeting reconvened on Wednesday 10th February 2010 at 7.00 p.m.

In the Chair: Alderman F Campbell (Mayor)

Present: Aldermen:
C Cousley, MBE (Deputy Mayor)
J Simpson
Councillors:
A Cavlan J Finlay
R Halliday A Patterson
E Robinson I Stevenson
M Storey, MLA

Apologies: Alderman H Connolly
Councillors:
B Kennedy H Connolly
T McKeown M McCamphill

In Attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Borough Services,
Director of Central & Leisure Services, Head of
Corporate & Development Services

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay seconded by Councillor Cavlan and **AGREED:**

that Council reconvene its meeting "in committee".

The Director of Central & Leisure Services tabled revised summary of general estimate of rates and comparative figures for the current year, V6, circulated, showing a rate increase of 8.12%. She also presented an analysis paper of the changes agreed on 8/2/2010 to v.6 of the rate book, set out in annex 2.

- Councillor Storey joined the meeting at this stage 7.30 p.m.

The Director of Central & Leisure Services circulated 9 month variance report for current year and reported on income in excess of £100,000 by way of final penny product for 2009-10 and on the overall reserves position.

There ensued a lengthy discussion on the capital fund for landfill closure with a member seeking clarity as to the consequences of not providing funding to the limit required by the Auditor so that he could consider if Council should make representations to the Minister given the impending wind-up of Councils. The Director explained the UK Accounting Standards which required for all known liabilities of Council to be accounted for and that the landfill closure provision was deemed to be a liability. Failure to conform to these standards could lead to qualified accounts which would have consequences for Council. She reminded members that a decision was required to be made on provision (£150,000) in the 2008-09 accounts to allow these to be closed and signed off.

Members discussed a range of issues including possible disposal of Council assets; raising loans to fund projects, noting the need for a business case to be made; its decision to provide free admission to the museum.

It was proposed by Councillor Stevenson, seconded by Councillor Cavlan and **AGREED:**

that Council adjourn the meeting for 20 minutes.

The meeting adjourned at 8.30 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8.55 p.m.

Councillor Stevenson, on behalf of the DUP grouping, presented list of further savings, totalling £64,730, and asked that the Director to calculate and confirm the impact on the rate. He indicated that the party wished to give consideration to outstanding issues – the landfill closure contribution £163,000 and loan provision for a global development budget. Councillor Cavlan requested that the Director to also provide an analysis the level of reductions in the two directorates and the Office of the Chief Executive.

It was proposed by Councillor Stevenson seconded by Councillor Finlay and **AGREED:**

that the meeting be adjourned to Friday 12th February at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 10.05 p.m.

Friday 12th February 2010.

The meeting reconvened on Friday 12th February 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

In the Chair: Alderman F Campbell (Mayor)
Alderman C Cousley, MBE (Deputy Mayor) – page 6 et seq)

Present: Aldermen:
H Connolly J Simpson
Councillors:
A Cavlan J Finlay
R Halliday M McCamphill

P McGuigan D McKay, MLA
T McKeown A Patterson
I Stevenson

Apologies: Councillor B Kennedy

In Attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Borough Services,
Director of Central & Leisure Services, Head of
Corporate & Development Services

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay seconded by Councillor Cavlan and **AGREED:**

That Council reconvene its meeting "in committee".

The Director of Central & Leisure Services circulated a revised general estimate of rates, v.7, with comparative figures for the current year, incorporating the DUP group suggested savings of £64,730, put forward at the meeting on 10th February, detailed on annex 3. The estimate was now showing a revised rate increase of 6.90%. An analysis of reductions in the Office of the Chief Executive and the two directorates was also provided, as requested, annex 4.

Councillor Stevenson, on behalf of the DUP group, put forward deduction/additions, totalling £29,395.00.

Members discussed retendering of waste disposal contract. It was proposed by Councillor Stevenson seconded by Councillor Finlay and **AGREED:**

that Council retender the waste disposal contract for one year plus option for one additional year, assuming end of Council on June 2011.

It was **AGREED:**

that given the reduction in conference budget the policy for attendance by members at conferences be reviewed by Corporate & Central Services Committee.

It was **AGREED:**

that £80,000 be included in the budget for landsite closure provision and an additional £83,000 added to the capital fund from the proceeds of sale of land at Loughgiel, in respect of which planning permission had recently been secured for housing development, was received.

Some members voiced their concern at this course of action.

- Councillor McCamphill and Alderman Cousley joined the meeting at this stage, time 10.35 p.m. and Councillor McKeown joined the meeting at 10.45 p.m.

It was **AGREED:**

that a contribution of £2,500 be provided for the Lower Bann Advisory Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay seconded by Councillor Stevenson and **AGREED:**

that the meeting be adjourned to allow the Director of Central & Leisure Services to calculate revised rate and that a schedule of the additional deductions and additions agreed to version 7 of the book be prepared for circulation to members prior to consideration of the proposed revisions to the rate estimate.

The meeting adjourned at 11.10 a.m.

The meeting reconvened at 12.00 noon

The Mayor opened the meeting at 12.00 noon. The meeting resolved itself out of committee and the press joined the meeting.

Details of the deductions/additions put forward and agreed earlier in the meeting, totalling £29,395.00, were circulated, annex 5.

The Director of Central and Leisure Services circulated a revised rate estimate summary, v8, annex 6, with comparative figures for the current year and schedule of capital projects 2010/2011. The Capital projects total £1,539,000, with loan charges of £107856 in 2010/2011. She advised that the revised total net expenditure, taking account of the revisions agreed earlier in the meeting, was £7,030,584, which after taking account of grant the net amount to be raised was £5,717,017 giving, after application of penny product a domestic rate of 0.3328 pence and a non-domestic rate of 25.9322 pence, an increase of 0.0231 (7.46%). As there was no increase in the regional rate for the incoming year domestic ratepayers would see an increase in their rates bills of 3.5%, which for a house valued at £200,000 was just under £4 per month, or £2 per month for a house valued at £100,000. The increase for commercial ratepayers was 6.1%.

Expressing thanks to the officers for the work done on the estimates Councillor Stevenson proposed :

that Council approve and authorise the general estimate of rates for 2010 - 11 presented, set out in annex 6, including the capital projects, with total net expenditure of £7,030,584, net amount to be raised £5,717,017 and set the non-domestic rate at 25,9322p and the domestic rate at 0.0231p, an increase of 7.46%.

This was seconded by Councillor Cavlan, who also expressed thanks to officers for the many long hours of work and additional meetings attended. She also thanked other parties for their contribution. She also welcomed the inclusion of funding for capital projects which would enable provision of amenities in local communities.

Each of the parties in turn: thanked officers for the work carried out on the rate, the other parties for their contribution and the spirit of co-operation in trying to keep the rate as low as possible; commented on current difficult economic conditions and very tight budgets set; welcomed contributions to key events and programmes and the inclusion of funding for community based projects which would benefit local communities.

- The Mayor left the meeting at this stage, time 12.10 p.m., for another engagement during the members comments and the Deputy Mayor assumed the Chair.

Further exchanges between members referred to projects which they would like to see progressed during the year and commented on the difficult rate setting process and the hard choices which had to be made.

The Deputy Mayor then put the motion to the meeting. 9 members voted for the motion, 1 against, with 2 abstentions. **The Deputy Mayor declared the motion carried**

The Chief Executive, on behalf of all officers involved in the process, particularly the two Directors, returned thanks to the members for their kind remarks. He also expressed thanks to the members for the way they had worked together to achieve a rate acceptable to Council and, he hoped, the public.

The meeting closed at 12.20 p.m.

APPENDICES:

- **Annex 1 : Schedule of Savings 8/2/2010 (v.5)**
- **Annex 2: Schedule of Savings 10/2/2010 (v.6)**
- **Annex 3: Schedule of Savings 12/2/2010 (v.7)**
- **Annex 4: Analysis of reductions in Office of Chief Executive, Borough Services, Central & Leisure Services Budgets (v.4, 5, 6, 7.)**
- **Annex 5: Schedule of deductions/additions 12/2/2010 (v.8)**
- **Annex 6: General Estimate of Rates 2010/11, including schedule of capital projects.**