

Council Meeting 15th November 2021

Minutes of Budget Meeting hosted in St. Gerard's Hall, Dundalk and held remotely over MS Teams.

In attendance:

Presiding:

Cathaoirleach: Councillor Pio Smith

Members:

(R) signifies remote attendance.

Councillors: Marianne Butler, Paula Butterly, James Byrne (R), Joanna Byrne, Kevin Callan, Emma Coffey, Bernie Conlon, Edel Corrigan (R), Tom Cunningham, Maria Doyle (R), Michelle Hall, Conor Keelan, Sean Kelly, Fiachra Mac Raghnaill, Pearse McGeough, Andrea McKevitt, Paddy McQuillan, Kevin Meenan, Dolores Minogue (R), Declan Power, John Reilly, Liam Reilly, John Sheridan, Eileen Tully, Antoin Watters, Maeve Yore

Apologies:

Councillors: Tomás Sharkey, Jim Tenanty.

Officials:

Present;

Chief Executive - Joan Martin,

Directors of Services – Joe McGuinness, Paddy Donnelly, Catherine Duff & Colette Moss (Acting for Frank Pentony),

Head of Finance – Bernie Woods,

Financial Accountant – Brian Lynch

Financial Accountant – Róisín McAuley

Meetings Administrator – Gráinne Tuomey.

Minute No. 203/21

Draft Budget 2022

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Pio Smith formally opened the meeting to consider the Draft Budget for 2022. Cllr Kevin Callan proposed a motion to accept the budget as presented to Members, subject to amendments and Cllr Liam Reilly seconded the motion.

Members expressed some disagreement with this, and asked that the draft budget be discussed first.

Head of Finance Bernie Woods and the Chief Executive gave an overview on the budget as presented to Members, including future changes to the Local Property Tax Scheme, alignment of Rates across the County, and COVID impact on finances. Members were advised that mainly apart from Capital Grant funding, the council were still operating on the same basic income and that the Executive considered that the budget presented, set out a strong programme of delivery for the people of the County. Any discretionary funds of which there were little were expended on housing maintenance, community grants and tidy town supports. The Chief Executive advised that Members had 14 days only to adopt the budget with or without amendment.

The members were also advised that they could individually transfer some or all of their Conference Allowance to the Councillor Community Allocation Scheme.

Cllr. Kevin Callan again proposed to accept the budget as is, and Cllr. Liam Reilly seconded this.

Cllr. Michelle Hall proposed an amendment to the budget to redistribute funds to the Biodiversity Fund. Following some discussion on this item and the amount of funding proposed for Climate Action and including discussion on Climate Action measures, Cllr. Hall withdrew her motion.

A discussion around the format of the meeting took place and a request was made to go through the budget sequentially as it was laid out by Directorate. Cllr. Emma Coffey suggested having received the budget a week ago Members had read the report, and proposed to take the budget heading by heading on the table at back of the budget. Cllr. Callan seconded this but Cllr Butler suggested that there was information in the text of the document that was not fully covered in the table. Cllr. Callan then suggested that each directorate could be gone through by heading, starting at housing and any questions could be raised.

The Cathaoirleach advised Members that they would start at page 10 of the document and relate to figures at back.

Members went through each Directorate as listed in the Draft Budget and the Executive responded to questions raised.

Cllr. Marianne Butler **proposed** to reject the proposed Municipal District Allocation of €75,000 for each district and distribute it as follows:

- €30,000 for each District.
- The remainder to be divided by 29 (the number of Councillors) and distributed to Municipal Districts based on Councillors per district.

This was **seconded** by Cllr. Conor Keelan.

Cllr. Callan made **further proposal** to leave the Municipal District allocation as is, that Members were member of one Council with 3 Districts treated equally, Ardee was just as important as Dundalk, Drogheda just as important as Ardee, and that they always worked on the basis that the three Districts are treated the same.

This was **seconded** by Cllr. John Sheridan.

A request for a breakdown of the proposed exact numbers was made. Cllr. Butler confirmed as follows:

- Ardee €57,931.03
- Dundalk €90,517.24
- Drogheda €76,551.72

More discussion followed on this matter with some Councillors expressing support of this proposal with others expressing support of equal distribution between districts.

Cllr John Sheridan advised that Ardee having the smallest number of Councillors could not defend against the bigger numbers should they wish to take their allocation, likening it to '*taking school lunch money off the small child*'.

The Cathaoirleach expressed support of equal distribution stating that Drogheda and Dundalk being designated growth centres get more funding generally.

It was **proposed** by Cllr. Kevin Callan and **seconded** by Cllr. Dolores Minogue that the MD allocation be distributed equally between the three districts and a roll call vote was held as follows:

	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
BUTLER, Marianne		1		
BUTTERLY, Paula	1			
BYRNE, James	1			
BYRNE, Joanna	1			
CALLAN, Kevin	1			
COFFEY, Emma		1		
CONLON, Bernie	1			
CORRIGAN, Edel	1			
CUNNINGHAM, Tom	1			
DOYLE, Maria			1	
HALL, Michelle	1			
KEELAN, Conor		1		
KELLY, Sean		1		
Mac RAGHNAILL, Fiachra	1			
McGEOUGH, Pearse	1			
McKEVITT, Andrea		1		
McQUILLAN, Paddy	1			
MEENAN, Kevin	1			
MINOGUE, Dolores	1			
POWER, Declan	1			
REILLY, John		1		
REILLY, Liam	1			
SHARKEY, Tomás				1
SHERIDAN, John	1			
SMITH, Pío	1			
TENANTY, Jim				1
TULLY, Eileen	1			
WATTERS, Antoin	1			
YORE, Maeve			1	
Totals	19	6	2	2

And the proposal for equal distribution of the MD allocation was agreed.

Following a lunch break:

Bernie Woods, Head of Finance, referring to a form given to Members to sign to indicate their individual preference, requested that Members agree the transfer of conference monies to the Councillors community allocation scheme where agreed. This was

Proposed by: Cllr. Emma Coffey

Seconded by: Cllr. Liam Reilly, and as there were no objections it was so resolved.

Bernie Woods, Head of Finance, advised Members that if voting to adopt the budget for 2022 under S103 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended, they would also be requested to agree the annual rates of valuation, as well as the rate of refund for Rates on Vacant Premises.

A motion to vote to adopt the draft Budget was

Proposed by: Cllr. Kevin Callan

Seconded by: Cllr. Emma Coffey, and a roll call vote was held as follows:

	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
BUTLER, Marianne	1			
BUTTERLY, Paula	1			
BYRNE, James	1			
BYRNE, Joanna		1		
CALLAN, Kevin	1			
COFFEY, Emma	1			
CONLON, Bernie	1			
CORRIGAN, Edel		1		
CUNNINGHAM, Tom		1		
DOYLE, Maria	1			
HALL, Michelle	1			
KEELAN, Conor	1			
KELLY, Sean	1			
Mac RAGHNAILL, Fiachra	1			
McGEOUGH, Pearse		1		
McKEVITT, Andrea	1			
McQUILLAN, Paddy	1			
MEENAN, Kevin		1		
MINOGUE, Dolores	1			
POWER, Declan	1			
REILLY, John	1			
REILLY, Liam	1			
SHARKEY, Tomás				1
SHERIDAN, John	1			
SMITH, Pio	1			
TENANTY, Jim				1
TULLY, Eileen	1			
WATTERS, Antoin		1		
YORE, Maeve	1			
Totals	21	6	0	2

The 2022 Budget, (as amended by the total of the individual member's transfer of funds from Conferences to Councillor Community Allocations) was therefore adopted by resolution of Council.

There being no other business the meeting concluded.

The Minutes were confirmed at a meeting of the Council held on:

Date: _____

Cathaoirleach: _____

Meeting Administrator: _____