

Minutes of 2023 Budget Meeting hosted in the Council Chamber of County Hall, Dundalk on 21st November 2022.

In attendance:

Presiding: Cathaoirleach: Councillor Conor Keelan

Members: Councillors: Marianne Butler, Paula Butterly, James Byrne , Joanna Byrne, Kevin Callan, Emma Coffey, Bernie Conlon, Edel Corrigan, Tom Cunningham, Michelle Hall, Sean Kelly, Pearse McGeough, Andrea McKevitt, Paddy McQuillan, Kevin Meenan, Dolores Minogue , Declan Power, John Reilly, Liam Reilly, Tomás Sharkey, John Sheridan, Jim Tenanty, Eileen Tully, Antoin Watters, Maeve Yore

Apologies: Councillors: Maria Doyle, Fiachra Mac Raghnaill, Pío Smith

Officials: Joan Martin, Chief Executive
Joe McGuinness, Director of Services
Paddy Donnelly, Director of Services
Catherine Duff, Director of Services
Thomas McEvoy, Directors of Services
Bernie Woods, Head of Finance
Brian Lynch, Senior Executive Officer
Róisín McAuley, Financial Accountant
Gráinne Tuomey, Meetings Administrator

Minute No. 198/22

Draft Budget 2023

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Conor Keelan opened the meeting to consider the Draft Budget for 2023. The Chief Executive, Joan Martin requested Head of Support Services, Bernie Woods to give Members a briefing on the budget as set out before them.

Bernie Woods advised the 2023 budget provided for expenditure of €158.4 million, an increase of €18.2 million on 2022. The main increases being grant funded areas. Members were advised that within the budget they were also being requested to decide on rates equalisation, through first elimination of existing base rates for the former town authorities and county and adjustment of the rate in all areas to €0.2191.

The Chief Executive explained that there was a statutory requirement to equalise rates by the 2024 and that if this was not done now it would have to be done next year. Members were told that while the County Rate would increase, it was historically very low, and Louth was much lower than most counties. The overall equalisation of the rates would not see a financial gain for the Council in 2023. Equalisation could however give the council an opportunity to raise

funds by way of an annual increase in years thereafter which was not currently an option for Louth, but which was used by other councils to increase income.

Some discussion took place around items in the budget document and all queries raised were responded to by the Executive.

Cllr Kevin Callan, describing the budget as a budget of equals **proposed** a motion to accept the budget as presented to Members, and Cllr Declan Power **seconded** the motion.

Cllr Jim Tenanty **proposed** the transfer of unused Conference Monies to Community Grant Allocations. This was **seconded** by Cllr Declan Power, and individual forms were handed to Members in order that they sign their preference in moving up to €700 each from their Conference allowance to allocations.

Cllr Butler proposed that the adoption of the budget be deferred until Members had a chance to go through it which was supported by Cllr Yore. The Chief Executive advised that it was up to Members to decide when to adopt the budget within the statutory timeframe, and while she had not asked Directors to give individual presentations on their sections, they were there and available to answer all questions raised.

The Members went through the budget in order of sections and raised questions which were responded to by the respective Directors and the Chief Executive. Members were informed if they wished to make any changes to monetary allocations within the budget they must balance this from another area. When all questions raised were answered it was suggested that the Capital Budget be dealt with after the main budget as it was separate to what the Members were required to adopt.

Cllr Minogue proposed a ten minute break to consider items, which was seconded by Cllr Andrea McKevitt.

On return from the break, Bernie Woods having looked at the forms filled out by Members on the proposal to move conference allowance to allocations, confirmed that €18,200 was requested by Members.

Cllr Jim Tenanty again **proposed** acceptance of signed applications for the moving of conference monies to community grant allocations, which was **seconded** by Cllr Michelle Hall and resolved.

The matter of equalisation of rates and adoption of the Budget remained, and Members were reminded that there was a Proposal to adopt which had been Seconded with no objections to same.

The Cathaoirleach indicated that he wished the matter to go to a Roll Call Vote. In line with Standing Order 14(iii) which allows the Cathaoirleach to decide on the appropriateness of a vote, a Roll Call Vote was therefore held on all items in the Clár as presented to Members as follows:

Name	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
Marianne Butler	1			
Paula Butterly		1		

James Byrne		1		
Joanna Byrne		1		
Kevin Callan	1			
Emma Coffey	1			
Bernie Conlon		1		
Edel Corrigan		1		
Tom Cunningham		1		
Maria Doyle				1
Michelle Hall	1			
Conor Keelan	1			
Sean Kelly	1			
Fiachra MacRaghnaill				1
Pearse McGeough		1		
Andrea McKevitt		1		
Paddy McQuillan	1			
Kevin Meenan		1		
Dolores Minogue		1		
Declan Power	1			
John Reilly	1			
Liam Reilly		1		
Tomás Sharkey		1		
John Sheridan	1			
Pio Smith				1
Jim Tenanty	1			
Eileen Tully	1			
Antóin Watters		1		
Maeve Yore	1			
	13	13	0	3

As the vote was split, in accordance with Standing Order 14(ii)(b), Gráinne Tuomey, Meeting Administrator advised of the right of the Chair to have a casting vote should he wish to exercise this option.

The Cathaoirleach Cllr Conor Keelan advised that he wished to use the casting vote in favour of the Budget and equalisation of rates and the 2023 Budget was therefore deemed adopted by resolution of Council.

Members then briefly went through the Capital Programme and raised queries which were answered by the Executive.

There being no other business the meeting concluded.

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

Date: 19/12/22

Cathaoirleach: Conor Keelan

Meeting Administrator: Aileen O'Sullivan