

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE OF DUNGANNON AND SOUTH TYRONE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY 2014 IN THE COUNCIL OFFICES, CIRCULAR ROAD, DUNGANNON

MEMBERS PRESENT: In the Chair, Councillor Monteith (Chair)

Councillors Ashton, Brush, Cavanagh, Cuthbertson, Daly, Donnelly, Gildernew, Gillespie, McGonnell, McGuigan, Molloy, Mulligan, O'Neill, Robinson, Somerville and Varsani

APOLOGY: Councillor Cuddy

OFFICERS PRESENT: A Burke, Chief Executive (CE)
B Currie, Human Resources Advisor (HRA)
P Kerr, Director of Finance (DF)
F McClements, Acting Director of Environmental Services (ADES)
G Smith, Council Business Manager (CBM)

The meeting commenced at 7.30 pm

1 DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility with regard to any declaration of conflict of interest.

2 BUDGET 2014-15

2.1 Draft Budget Report for 2014-15

The report (appendix 1) of the Director of Finance was presented. The DF stated that after several meetings with Senior Management Team (SMT), budget holders and party leaders re capital budgets/plans the draft budget 2014-15 shows a rate increase of zero per cent. The DF further stated that the Council rate remains unchanged from 2009-10. If increases had been applied year on year in line with the regional rate Dungannon's domestic and non-domestic rate would have been 10.5 per cent higher and if increased to keep pace with inflation over that period would have been 16.9 per cent higher.

During discussion some members expressed concern that majority of capital expenditure was concentrated in the two urban areas at the

expense of rural areas. It was noted that of the £14m capital spend £9m was funding received for schemes in the urban areas and would not be available for spending in rural areas.

It was also noted that this Council's share of the 2014-15 budgeted transition costs after department funding is £643,437 and it was proposed that these costs be financed by means of a loan. Members voiced concern at the cost of the reform process and the unwillingness, after extensive lobbying, of the Department to fund the process from central funds.

Members stated that rate increase of zero per cent from 2009-10 was a good news story for businesses and residents and it was imperative that the PR opportunity is maximised through the local and regional press. As press run with their rates stories before the Council meeting, due to printing deadlines, members recommended that press release should be issued prior to ratification by Council stating what the Council is expected to ratify.

The CE stated that he had preliminary discussions with the PR consultants and with a representative of the small traders association and would be highlighting zero rate increase for five consecutive years. Press release would also deal with progress made on issues within corporate plan that would emphasise that the high standard of services has been maintained.

2.1.1 Adoption of Report

Proposed by Councillor Mulligan
Seconded by Councillor McGonnell and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the budget report 2014-15 be adopted and that all recommendations, subject to the foregoing, be approved.

2.2 Addendum – Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy 2014-15 and Reserves

The DF advised that under regulation 6 of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 Councils now have a statutory requirement to charge to its general fund an amount of MRP which it considers to be "prudent". The addendum report (appendix 2) dealing with MRP Policy for 2014-15 and Reserves was presented.

2.2.1 Adoption of Addendum

Proposed by Councillor Brush
Seconded by Councillor McGuigan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the Addendum – MRP Policy 2014-15 and Reserves prepared by the Director of Finance be adopted and that all recommendations, subject to the foregoing, be approved.

Councillor Molloy arrived at 8.00 pm.

3 REPORT FROM CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER ON THE ESTIMATES FOR 2014-15

The report (appendix 3) of the Chief Financial Officer on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of the reserves was presented. During discussion members complimented the DF and her staff on the work involved with the budget process.

3.1 Adoption of Report

Proposed by Councillor McGonnell
Seconded by Councillor McGuigan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the report of the Chief Financial Officer on the estimates for 2014-15 be adopted.

ADES left at 8.03 pm.
Councillor Varsani arrived at 8.03 pm.

4 FINANCIAL MATTERS

The report (appendix 4) of the Director of Finance was presented.

4.1 Adoption of Report

Proposed by Councillor Mulligan
Seconded by Councillor O'Neill and

Resolved That the report of the Director of Finance be adopted and that all recommendations be approved.

The DF thanked members, senior management team, budget holders and staff for their support with the budget process.

The DF left the meeting at 8.10 pm

5 PERSONNEL MATTERS

The report (appendix 5) of the Human Resources Advisor was presented reference being made to the following:

STRATEGIC

5.1 Appointment of Chief Executive – Mid Ulster Council (item 1.1)

The HRA advised that as agreed by Council he had again written to the Minister to outline concerns surrounding the process to appoint a Chief Executive for the new Mid Ulster Council and to seek clarification on the indemnity issue. Response dated 6 January 2014 was received from the Minister and was read to the meeting.

Councillor Cavanagh, as member of the STC, asked it to be recorded that he had severe reservations, of what he felt was a flawed procedure, around the setting up of the STC and the make-up of the 5 person appointments committee which has party representation 4 : 1 and which to his mind should have been 2 : 1 :1 which would have been more reflective of the community background in Mid Ulster.

INFORMATION

5.2 Additional Remuneration for Increase Workload (LG Reform Programme) (item 3.2) Health & Safety (item 3.5)

Agreed that these items be taken at the end of the meeting.

5.3 Job Evaluation Process (item 3.3)

The HRA advised that DES had taken on full role of CE and that DDEH had assumed the role of ADES but as would not be taking on the full range of duties the post had been evaluated at band PO13. An appeal has been lodged which leaves 43 not 42 posts in the appeals process.

6 RPA UPDATE

The report (appendix 6) of the Chief Executive was presented.

The CE stated that communication with staff was important with the first news sheet being issued prior to Christmas and going forward a news sheet will be produced and issued bi-monthly.

Issues concerning staff, particularly in relation to terms and conditions, security of employment and location of offices were discussed at a

meeting with Unions yesterday when it was agreed that current situation would continue to April 2015.

6.1 Adoption of Report

Proposed by Councillor Gillespie
Seconded by Councillor McGuigan and

Resolved That the RPA Update report is noted.

The CE left at 8.15 pm.

7 PERSONNEL MATTERS CONTINUED

INFORMATION

7.1 Additional Remuneration for Increased Workload (LG Reform Programme) (item 3.2)

The HRA referred to this item as detailed in report and in particular to decision taken by Council in 1995 "That all recommendations of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Clerks/Chief Executives (Northern Ireland) be automatically applied". During discussion members expressed concern that Council tied to something that is nineteen years old.

Resolved That as per decision taken in 1995 that report from Joint Negotiating Committee for Clerks/Chief Executives (Northern Ireland) is adopted and that legal advice is taken in relation to possibility of changing this decision.

7.2 Health & Safety (item 3.5)

The HRA presented letter dated 8 January 2014 from Partnership Liaison Officer Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) providing an update on the work of the Exemplar Employer Group. He advised that Mr Jim King, HSENI Principal Inspector for Public Sector, is keen to speak directly to Council management and elected members about health and safety and would welcome an invitation from individual Councils.

Resolved That Jim King, HSENI Principal Inspector for Public Sector, be invited to meet with the Senior Management Team and any issues of concern arising should be brought to future committee.

7.3 Adoption of Report

Proposed by Councillor Daly
Seconded by Councillor Cavanagh and

Resolved That the report of the Human Resources Advisor be adopted and that all recommendations, subject to the foregoing, be approved.

8 DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting was called for 7.30 pm and concluded at 8.20 pm.

MAYOR _____

CHIEF EXECUTIVE _____